THE HONORABLE ONES

LITERARY & PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

An English Literary Adaptation

Translated from the Arabic

THE DEATH SEQUENCE

The drumbeat of the baby's cries quickened, pounding violently. Hungry, the infant gasped for breath and lunged toward its mother's breast, clutching at it like a ravenous lion that had searched in vain for prey and at last found it within reach. The baby knew nothing of life beyond its mother's breast: warmth and tenderness, a few drops of water to drink, and the gentle touch of loving fingers against its soft, fragile body. To the infant, this was life in its entirety.

The old woman watched from her chair, smiling as she followed the baby's laughter and the eager movements of its feet, which it lifted and grasped with the fascination of gentle waves settling upon a shore. Her mind wandered far away, and she whispered to herself:

"Death was never a sudden stop waiting for us at the finish line. It was an eternal dance that began with our very first cry. From the moment our feet touched the earth, we have walked along that same finish line, resisting it and celebrating life while death quietly practices its art upon us, in silent increments we scarcely feel."

Long ago, I was this infant—this baby girl. I did as she does, saw what she sees, and felt what she feels. At that age, life contained nothing more than what this child possesses now. The old woman felt her breath catch for a moment as a question rose within her: Where had that baby gone? Was she not me?

She fell silent, then sighed, wonder and sorrow mingling like wine in a cup. “No. She is no longer me. Nothing of that infant remains. She vanished; she died inside me. Every feeling, every gaze, every touch, everything she once enjoyed went with her. It blew away, evaporated, scattered like a feather torn apart by a violent wind. I am no longer that baby.”

Her eyes widened as if she had suddenly awakened. “Yes, the infant died. She is not me. Perhaps something in her once resembled me, but I no longer possess what she possessed, do what she did, or receive the care and tenderness she knew. She died and was buried long ago. Deep within me, I dug her a grave; she disappeared into it until not a trace remained. Every new birth within us necessarily means the death of a former, unaware self. That infant died: her absolute innocence was taken from her, along with the gentleness of one who knew no evil. Her first, unspoiled laugh was buried beneath the weight of the awareness that came after.”

Before the aged woman, all the selves she had once been began to take shape, like real ghosts she might almost touch. She could hear their whispers and feel each transformation, each development, and then each disappearance—as though that self had never existed. The figures called to her. Their dialogue seemed visible on her wrinkled face, both outwardly present and inwardly concealed. She began to converse with the selves that had faded and turned to nothing, watching their scenes unfold before her as if made of flesh, blood, and fire.

Stage One: A Dialogue Between the Infant and the Child

The death of unspoiled instinct

Scene: A quiet darkness. A faint whisper rises from a child’s body as it takes its first steps into life.

The Infant (the dead self): *(Her voice is an echo, filled with stillness and purity.)* “Ah, you who have only just emerged from my absolute silence—how dare you pull away my covering? I was something pure. No illusion had programmed me, no name had stained me. I was a floating idea without constraints. Why are you so eager to define yourself?”

The Child (the newly born self): *(Her voice is beginning to acquire its first notes, mingled with wonder.)* “You are a silence I cannot understand! I am light, color, and noise. I have begun to realize that the world has boundaries and the body can move. I taste food that is not the spring of stillness, and I hear stories claiming that some being watches us from above. You, O nothingness, never knew the taste of words or the magic of toys.”

The Infant: “You are stepping along the finish line they have drawn for you. Those words you boast of are your first chains; those stories about ‘the being’ are your first programmed illusions. By my nature, you were born without belief. No one had programmed you or taught you the rituals of a religion. No

one had dragged you into religious group rivalries, insisting that one set of rites was more correct, more authentic, or more faithful than another."

The old woman remembered that, as an infant, no one had burdened her with such instruction. No one had forced her to believe with absolute certainty that the rituals she would later be taught were the only true or best ones. She had not entered a divine marathon, desperately searching for—or imagining she had found—a god hidden inside one religion, one denomination, or one sect, each with its own forms and attributes that contradicted those of the others.

As a baby, she had not exhausted herself searching for a god who seemed to play hide-and-seek with humanity, vanishing into a thousand shapes and a thousand thousand religions and rituals, then declaring with complete confidence that he was one. One god—but which of these many versions was the one? Nobody knew. Was it an illusion, a mirage, a deception, an invention? No one had taught her to ask. As an infant, she knew only innocence and had no demands placed upon her. There was no need for hypocrisy or deceit, no rituals to perform, no threats or intimidation, no fear, and no imaginary rewards called life after death. She lived like a piece of white cotton, needing none of this effort or nonsense. Nothing could persuade her except a mother's warmth and biological need.

The Child: *(She smiles, a mixture of mischief and innocence. Yet that innocence is already showing the first faint stain, a thread of dirt spreading across the white patch within the infant.)* "Now—and only now—the infant has disappeared and vanished from existence. You buried her inside yourself and dug her grave by your own will."

The Infant: "No, no! That never happened. I did not bury the infant in the grave of my body. I searched for her when I awoke one day and could not find her. I screamed, searched the room, the house, and the street, calling out for her. But she did not answer. She was like a piece of ice melting beneath a scorching sun, or steam condensing inside a kettle until it dried away. I rushed to my room and looked in the mirror. There I saw a little girl of a few years. I kept calling for the infant, but she did not answer. Only the child in the mirror remained. Then the baby's ghost appeared, like a mirage approaching from afar, and told me sadly and bitterly, 'Time is over. The moment has passed.'"

The child laughed in defiance, her eyes full of scorn and revenge. "Indeed, the moment has passed; time is over. You have no choice now. I am all you have. I am the child, the tangible reality before you. No matter how much you scream and search for the infant, she will never answer. And now you have begun to inherit superstition; you have begun to replace instinctive certainty with religious doubt. How miserable you are—you inherited your ancestors' legacy before you even knew what inheritance meant."

The child surrendered and began to live her childhood, abandoning the cries and calls for the infant. Searching for what no longer existed was pointless. She was now a little girl, still innocent despite the faint stain that had dulled the whiteness within her. Much of the infant's purity remained. She played, laughed, ate, drank, ran, and walked; then she went to school and learned to read and write. Those around her began their gradual work of programming and indoctrination. One day they performed their religious rituals in front of her. At first, she understood nothing of their gestures and could not see why they needed them. Little by little, as she grew, they taught her at school, at home, in the street—in every place—that these rituals were magnificent, that they would make her happy, calm, and secure, and even solve every problem she faced. They kept teaching her until she mastered the art of being taught. Soon she practiced the rituals herself and spoke about them expertly to her classmates.

Stage Two: A Dialogue Between the Child and the Young Woman

The death of innocence and instinctive wonder

Scene: A vast space ruled by grand dreams and sharp contradictions. The dead child wears a faded dress; the young woman wears a gleaming crimson gown.

The young woman suddenly cried out in astonishment, calling for the child. She looked everywhere but could not find her. She missed her terribly—the child's presence, the sense of wonder she had carried away when she left. Weeping, the young woman called for help and begged someone to bring the child back. But whom could she call upon? Life itself offered no answer.

She stood before the mirror and touched a body that no longer resembled the innocent child she had known for so many years. Beneath her hands was a woman's body, curved and unmistakably feminine, with prominent breasts and a defined waist. Her face bore no resemblance to the missing child. Then she understood: the child had died inside her. She dug a small grave within this female body, buried the child deep in it, and covered her with earth. She would never find her again. In her place stood a teenager, then a woman in her twenties, overflowing with femininity, dreaming of love and consumed by urgent desires and womanly impulses. She did things the child had never done, felt what the child had never felt, and desired things the child could never have imagined.

Yet amid this storm of feelings, cravings, whims, and romantic adventures, she lost the child's way of seeing the world—and with it, her sense of wonder. The images before her grew dull. The streets seemed dim, heavy-footed, dreary; they wearied her, although they were the very same streets the vanished child had once loved. The inheritance of family and society weighed on her shoulders until she could barely bear it. The old shops no longer stirred her. Coca-Cola no longer tasted as it once had; sweets had lost their distinctive smell and their power to carry her into a world of delight. The

street had lost its sparkle, and her grandmother's house no longer seemed beautiful. The melodies that had lifted her through childhood's skies fell silent, replaced by the rhythms of desire and the whims of outings. Her needs had changed.

Now she was merely a young woman looking for hope, perhaps in a job, a man, love, or an income. She no longer cared about images or light. Wonder had died, and she did not seek it. Instead, she searched for a man to fill the emptiness left by the lost wonder, and for money to buy clothes for the female body that had become an object meant to stir emotion—but only under conditions and within restraints. She knew she could never recover the child, no matter how much she wept. She had to obey the desires and demands of the young woman standing before her, eyes defiant, whispering like a snake:

"Do not look for her. That child died years ago and was buried inside you. Now she is dust—or nothing. Submit to me: to my desires, to the reality before you, to the life you will live whether you wish to or not."

The Child (the dead self): *(Her voice is sad and reproachful.)* "You who inherited my funeral, do you remember me? I was the absolute wonder that chased a butterfly for no reason at all. I possessed fields of dreams so white they could cover the darkness of the world. And now you have come, young woman, after committing the terrible crime of killing the child within me—a crime for which no law in the world will ever punish you. Where is the innocent laugh that your wild desires had not yet stained?"

The Young Woman (the newly born self): *(Loudly, with defiance and anxiety.)* "Like you, I missed the child I knew all those years ago. I swear that sometimes I see you in my mirror and weep for you. But I grew up, matured, and saw you for what you were: a foolish, naïve little girl. I mocked your innocence when I remembered your fascination with ordinary things. What a silly child, seeing beauty in everything—even in ugliness itself!"

She sighed at length and spoke firmly. "She had to die. Do not put me on trial now; it is too late. She was innocent and naïve, delighted by the simplest thing—even a little toy or doll—as though it were an entire year's worth of treasure, or as though she had won a beauty crown and all the wealth in the universe. It was necessary to kill that fool. Now you must surrender to me, the young woman, and do what I command. Forget your childhood dreams. You are no longer that child. Those dreams were pink bubbles that could not withstand society's winds. My dreams have changed. Now I want power, recognition, and a woman's identity. You were innocent because you did not understand; I understand now that life is no game but a struggle. Did innocence leave me? Yes—but it gave me the strength to fight."

The Lost Child: "It gave you contamination, not strength. Look into your eyes: they no longer shine with faith in the simple things. They glitter with the desire to possess. Innocence left because you allowed religious illusion,

false rituals, and the society that deceived you to shape your distorted thoughts and drive you like a beast among a herd. As a child, you were more alert and aware. You asked questions. You had been indoctrinated less; your mind had not yet been fully programmed. It was clear as pure water, bright with logical questions, before editing, deletion, conditioning, and the control of religious myths and inherited social delusions. You selfish, foolish young woman—society taught you to let it define right and wrong. You turned your wish for freedom into a war against convention instead of a true liberation. You do not possess genuine wonder; you possess magnified anxiety!"

The Young Woman (the new self): *(Whispering in broken confession.)* "You are right. Sometimes I feel that I am merely pretending to be proud. I try to convince myself that youth is better, and that femininity is more useful, attractive, and full of its own special passion. But when I remember you, I see that what I call passion is contaminated by wild whims, desire, and temporary instinct. The mask falls away, and I see that I am possessed by instinct rather than in control of it. Now I understand the difference between your radiant, luminous wonder and my desires, which have matured only to lead, control, and possess me."

The young woman began to cry. Until then, she had resisted and concealed her face so the child would not see her tears, but they now fell like dew upon flowers in the early morning. "I live in constant conflict. Something irreplaceable has died inside me—something like a belief in nothingness, the belief you held, little child, when you were once an infant. The child who loved life for its own sake has disappeared—not for its pleasures, and not for the sake of some empty promise waiting beyond it."

"You have died, little child," the young woman said, "and the small mischief and naïve fears inside you have died beneath a wooden bed. The fields of imagination you planted in the darkness of a room, among the stories told by grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, and uncles, have withered. In their place has grown a dry logic that no longer knows how to dream."

Time passed, and the scene changed.

The Middle-Aged Self: The Death of Rebellion

Scene: A sudden quiet replaces the young woman's clamor—her feminine impulses, dreams, husband, children, and all that once surged through her mind and feelings. A grey mist slowly coils around her body. When she turns, she sees a woman in her late forties, approaching fifty, examining the white strands invading the blackness of her hair. The silver cuts through it like a sharp sword, advancing day by day. She gasps as she notices the first fine lines of wrinkles, which seem to stare back at her defiantly. Youth's blaze has begun to die down.

Middle Age (the newly born self): *(Her voice is heavy with exhaustion, wisdom, and disappointment.)* "Stand before me, young woman who has

gone missing. Show respect for my years and dignity. I know you are searching among the white hairs that have begun to overrun your head for the young woman you once were—the one whose noisy departure woke you, and whom you tried in vain to recover. I watched you laughably trying to hide me, to erase my features by coloring those white strands. I told you not to bother: the grey always returns. Its whiteness has cut into your black hair, and my wrinkles have invaded the youthful face you once had. Your skin has begun to sag and contract until that face has faded away. You will not find her; she will never return. Have you forgotten that we buried her together, in a deep grave within you, and covered her with a thick layer of earth? Stand now in respect for my age and dignity. She is nothing now. No matter how loudly you call, she will not answer. Your loud voice can no longer deceive anyone. You have exhausted the fuel of the stars that once lit your chest. I am here now, and my name is the Cold Harvest. Where is the rebellious fire you once brandished? Where is your certainty that you would change the world?"

The Young Woman (the dead self): *(Her voice gradually breaks, though she tries to sound strong.)* "So you are the new chain—the middle-aged woman nearing fifty. I knew you would come sooner or later. I tried to escape you, or at least postpone your arrival by a few years, but you insisted on occupying my body like a burdensome guest I never wanted. Yet biology imposed you upon me. Now you stand before me to remind me that we buried the young woman in a deep grave, covered her with thick earth, and watched her vanish within me. You slaughtered her with your sharp sword, invaded her, and made her bleed through the white hair and wrinkles now spreading across my face. How cruel you are! You stole my youth, stabbed it with a poisoned dagger."

The middle-aged woman laughed with authority. "And you were the shield that crushed the machine! I killed you to bring you stability, dignity, and maturity—to free you from youthful recklessness, false dreams, and empty promises. I am the composed, dignified self born into reality, your new reality. Biology brought me into your body to build you a house and draw a clear map for life. You now reap what I sowed through struggle, but you reap it coldly, without fervor. At least I believed in loss and victory. You believed in the necessity of things and in the revolution of desires and instincts that imprisoned you. I have come into your body to free you from them, so that you may learn that maturity is more suitable, clearer, more useful, wiser, and more experienced than the heedlessness of youth."

"You may think I fear the lost young woman's power, but I do not. I have realized that all that youthful vigor was beautiful nonsense. I lost you in order to gain silence. I can now see clearly the illusions we were programmed to believe, but I am tired of fighting them. You stripped me of rebellion and gave me the exhausting burden of acceptance. I now understand that we are merely cells moving toward nothingness, and that all those rules and religions were empty pretexts designed to keep slaves working in peace. Yet I

no longer have the energy to shout this aloud. The energy I once had died with the young woman within me. In its place remains the energy of stillness, mature contemplation, patience, and a deeper, more discerning view of the life we share now."

The Young Woman: "So you are a wise but helpless woman! You can see the godless truth clearly, yet you still walk with the herd because you have grown tired of running. The death of passion is the real death. You have become your own ghost, caring about small things while neglecting what matters. Do you not miss the day when I was ready to fight the whole world for an idea?"

The Middle-Aged Woman: "I do not miss a pointless struggle. I am now a remnant, gathering the broken mirror shards you left behind. I sleep to escape this painful philosophical awareness. Thank you, young woman: you died so that I could live what remains of my life, a life that is no more than a lie, in silence and disappointment."

Stage Four: A Dialogue Between Middle Age and Old Age

The death of strength, the survival of wisdom

Middle Age (the dead self): "I have left you wisdom, old woman—the one thing that does not die quickly. Strength, by contrast, is foam that washes away. I harvested for you, hoping to lengthen this brief remaining moment, but I failed. All I harvested was the bitter philosophical awareness you carry now: everything was absurd."

The woman, her hair entirely white and her face deeply furrowed, turned and saw before her a bent back, a cane held in trembling hands, and exhausted, dim eyes wandering across a mirror cracked by time.

The Old Woman: "Absurdity? Then you too have died without meaning? Have you left me to face the end alone with this knowledge? Yet I see what you cannot. I watch the cells dying; I see nothingness smiling at me from afar. Everything that passed was merely a temporal illusion, a space between one thing and another. You did not die; you turned into waiting."

How much time had passed? How many years? She could barely remember anything clearly. She struggled to recall even her daily needs; sometimes she forgot her grandchildren's names, ages, occupations, or what they had studied—or were studying. She gazed into the mirror again, like a fish searching for a river that had dried long ago.

All she saw was a mass of cotton-white hair and broken teeth—or the few stumps that remained—leaving empty gaps inside a sagging mouth. Her dry lips were etched with years of bitterness; wrinkles covered her face, the skin around her eyes, and her neck, which now hung like curtains dropped over what had once been a vibrant, youthful body. In the mirror she saw only an extremely old woman, wrapped in wrinkles, her hair white as cotton. A cane

supported her hunched back. Her legs trembled beneath her and barely held her upright; she dragged her feet with great effort, while her breath lay heavy and still, like stagnant water.

Where were the bright, ringing laughs of youth? Where were the legs that once raced the wind? Where was the firm, graceful female body? None of it remained. Where was even the woman in her forties? She had been younger than the missing young woman, but stronger, more active, and less helpless. Even she had departed, leaving no trace of such overwhelming white hair. This time, however, the old woman had learned her lesson. She did not search for the vanished self; she let her go quietly. She no longer had the strength to search, scream, call, or even whisper. Whispering itself had become a difficult ritual, something she could manage only when necessary. Her strength had failed, and she knew she must accept reality. She had neither the means nor the energy to seek the lost selves—the former beings that had been buried and died inside her one after another. They had become ghosts with no existence. What was the point of looking for something that was no longer there? She understood that everything was a handful of wind.

Stage Five: Farewell and Nothingness

A Dialogue Between the Old Woman and Death

Scene: The old woman lies in her chair, while the infant lies before her in a small wooden bed, still crying as though mourning her—or sensing the burden of the inheritance that will eventually disfigure its future laughter. The old woman's eyes remain open. She struggles through her dying breaths. The room is empty except for the infant's cries and the defiant movement of its little feet. She sees a dense shadow approaching slowly.

Death (the dense shadow): *(A voice without echo, whispering into the ear of consciousness.)* "The time has come to fulfill the promise, last heir. There is no longer an infant, a child, a young woman, or even a middle-aged woman. They all died and were buried inside you. Nothing remains but a crumbling ruin, like an old abandoned house coated in dust, its walls rusted, cracked, and furrowed. I have come to take this empty vessel, all the selves and lost identities you once contained, old woman. You and I now face each other, and you have no choice but to face me.

"I know you humans: you do not value your dead until I arrive, and you remember them only after they have gone. How many dear people lie forgotten in your rusted memories? While alive, they were ignored, humiliated, and treated as though they mattered to no one. Then I arrive as their eternal guest, and suddenly you remember them. You rush to say farewell, weep, fill your eyes with tears, and write a thousand elegies—as though they had always occupied your thoughts, as though you had been beside them every moment before they died. Only after I arrive do you mourn them in the most beautiful and tender words. Only then do you see what you never saw, understand what you never understood, praise them, remember

them, immortalize them, and value what they said and did while they were alive. Only after they have vanished do you judge them right and forget what you once said and did to them. You humans awaken your sleeping consciences only when I arrive—when it is too late. Then you invent eternity out of nothingness.

"You are all beneath my hammer. When I choose, I strike down the one I have selected and send them where there is no return; I seize their final breath until they pass into nothing. And now I am all that remains for you, frail old woman. I will bury the last crumbling fragment of your former selves. They have all died, and now it is your turn to join them where there is nothing to return to. Congratulations: you will receive nothingness, the void, the emptiness. Extinction is all there is. You would be deluded to think otherwise. For all your years, they deceived you and traded on your dreams, selling you a bargain called life after death. I will not deceive you as those who programmed you did. I believe in science and reason. I am frank and honest; I know no patchwork excuses, fraud, or religious delusions and rituals, all of which you practiced throughout your life.

"Consciousness ends; perception stops; the brain ceases to work; then the heart, the pump of blood, stops too. That is all. Perhaps you will join nature's cycle and become a tree, an edible fruit, or drinking water. Perhaps your decaying bones and dust will become part of the natural cycle on this wretched planet, which I assure you will one day end. But this will not begin the imaginary myth of an afterlife with which you were deceived, poor old woman who practiced rituals day and night out of fear and greed for imaginary rewards. Something deeper and more mature may endure: life on other planets—Mars, Saturn, Jupiter—and other beings. The human species will probably become extinct and be replaced by beings more advanced, longer-lived, and technologically more developed. Who knows? Perhaps they will live forever, never fall ill or decay; perhaps they will not defecate or urinate, perhaps they will not have sex as you do, perhaps they will not bleed, perhaps they will not even be made of flesh and blood. What matters is that life and the universe will continue, enduring forever."

Death asked, "Are you afraid of this nothingness you used to philosophize about, and of the words of charlatan sheikhs and religious men who spun tales around it for so long, dressing you in the patched garment of illusion and falsehood that you wore all your life?"

The Old Woman: *(Her voice is barely audible, yet firm with understanding.)* "You are not the end, Death. You are merely the final confirmation of reason. I now realize that I spent my entire life believing a great lie, wasting my years on religious illusions and the trick of one god. I believe you now because you are logical and trust science. I am no longer afraid of the nothingness I once feared, nor of the afterlife they invented, taught me, and programmed me to believe in since childhood. I realize now that I have carried nothingness with me since my first cry. Only now do I feel

relief—relief from the burden and toil of life. I am happy because I will have nothingness; at last, eternal silence, far from life's illusions and programmed clamor. Atheism was my instinct, my honest nature before it was contaminated or taught away; and nothingness is my destiny. Both release me from divine illusion."

Death: "Have you left anything worthy of remaining in the emptiness in which you lived? Did you enjoy pleasure, accomplish a noble goal, or complete the great mission you dreamed of when you were young? What is your final harvest?"

The Old Woman: *(She closes her eyes for a moment.)* "My harvest is a comforting regret. I regret every minute in which I was not myself, every moment spent in illusion and deceptive hope. Yet I am happy now, because at last I have grasped the hard truth: there is no creator, no punishment, and no reward after you. My final message is this: live as though there were no god, and die as though there were no resurrection. Now... take me."

The Final Scene: A Dialogue Between the Old Woman and the Grave

The final encounter with absolute nothingness

Scene: Complete darkness. The remaining self begins to feel the cold of earth. A voice emerges from the ground—from nothingness itself.

The Grave (the silent voice of nothingness): *(A rough voice embodying the material and logical end.)* "Welcome, old woman. There is no light here, no reckoning, no angels. I am neither paradise nor fire. I am simply soil that returns cells to their elements. Did you achieve immortality through a message or a word, as you once dreamed, or have you realized that everything will become dust?"

The Old Woman: "How coldly logical you are! I understand now that the attempt to leave an eternal message was itself an illusion. The last illusion nesting in other people's minds is that achievement equals immortality. But the only immortality is the endurance of the atom. I lived as best I could; I loved and strayed; I believed in reason and rejected the myths of every religion without exception. I learned that there is no heaven, only atmosphere and space; that other life may exist, and that nothingness means extinction. Now I possess nothing but an exhausted body."

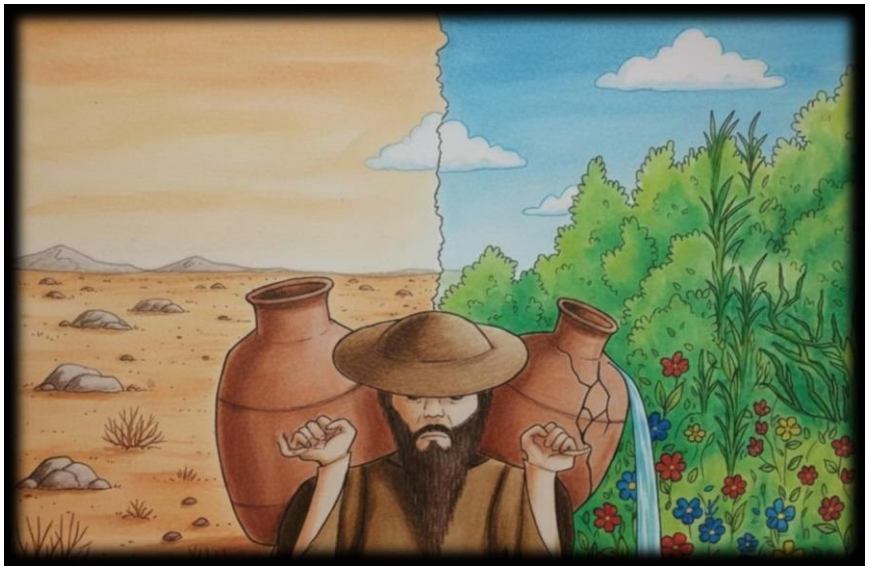
The Grave: "Then have all your former selves—the beings you passed through from infancy onward—come to an end?"

The Old Woman, dead in her grave: *(Her smile fades; her voice mingles with the dust of the end.)* "No. Only now does the true sequence begin: a scientific and logical one, without the deceit and fraud of religions, and without the imaginary god invented by human beings to flee from themselves and deceive themselves. They imagine they are more important than other creatures, that they were made—or, as they claim, created—to live

forever. In their foolish arrogance, they invented another life and an imaginary being, believing it would protect, judge, punish, or reward them alone, unlike all other creatures. Yet if we looked at reality honestly, we would find human beings among the basest, vilest, and most malicious of creatures, the source of every corruption and ruin."

The old woman's body began to decompose. After the worms consumed it, it would gradually become silent earth, returning as a plant, a stone, or nothing at all. "My life was no more than a passing moment between one thing and another. In the end, I did not die; the illusion simply stopped beating. Farewell, earth… farewell, mortal existence."

End of reflection



THE CRACK

“We live in an age that glorifies outward perfection and mocks the mark left by a wound. But I say otherwise: the one who lacks something may become its greatest giver, because loss has planted need deep within them, and that need is a spring that never runs dry. Salvation does not lie in sealing the cracks, but in letting light shine through them.”

So the wise man thought as he walked slowly, carrying on his shoulders the two jars he habitually took back and forth every day. Despite his advanced age, he kept walking for exercise; his years had brought him experience and maturity. He carried one jar on his right shoulder and the other on his left, listening with interest to the conversation between them.

A Symbolic Projection: The Two Jars

The intact jar attacked her sister with the arrogance of stagnant pride.

The Intact Jar: “You cracked vessel, symbol of deficiency in a world of completeness! Everything goes smoothly for me. I am the perfect representation of what society wants: quiet, obedient, full, and securely in my place. I cause no disorder. You, by contrast, are nothing but a bleeding crack, losing what you have at every step. You are proof of failure that produces nothing.”

The Cracked Jar: *(Her voice is sorrowful, but carries a defiant strength.)* “You are complete only on the outside, my intact sister. You are the model of a woman who accepted submission as her purpose and brought children into a life they never chose. I see marriage as a heavy restraint, a rock pressing on

my chest, a cursed disease I could not endure even for a few hours. Yes, I am cracked, but my crack is the price of rebelling against a society that sees a woman as a vessel for obedience rather than a source of existence!"

The Intact Jar: "You are alone, rejected, unable to fit in. Your crack is a social and psychological disability: you refuse the restraint that life requires. You cannot hold the water of marriage or endure the bonds of partnership. You are an outcast, refusing the natural path society mapped out for you. You are not fit to be a vessel. Your crack shows that you cannot obey and will not accept the system. Every step you take is a lost one; you lose something at every turn. No wonder they consider you defective."

The Cracked Jar: "You describe a dead kind of perfection. You have produced nothing, confronted nothing, and never had to carve your own path. Every pain I have suffered in my education, every struggle for divorce and liberation—that is precisely what my crack represents. It is not weakness. It is a force of will that compels me to grow."

The intact jar repeated her accusation: the cracked one was a social failure, unable to hold the water of marriage or the bonds of partnership, an outcast who refused society's natural route. She was not fit to serve as a vessel. Her crack proved her inability to obey and her rejection of order. She moved through life as a loser, and no wonder others saw her as incomplete.

The Cracked Jar: *(Her voice blends pain, pride, and awareness.)* "You are complete only in a false outward sense, my intact sister. You chose surrender and a hollow fullness over a free existence. I have always been the unbearable individual. I refuse to see a man as a partner; I see him as a heavy chain, a cursed plague whose presence I cannot endure for hours on end. My crack is not failure—it is a declaration of sovereignty! It is the price of rebelling against obedience, and the defeat of the idea that my worth depends on the presence of another being. I have created a world of my own, one in which I can do without everyone else, because, at my core, I accept division only by myself."

Yet the cracked jar knew that something inside her had been shattered. At times she only pretended to be strong; at other times she truly was. Still, a deep feeling of frustration and despair sometimes took hold of her. Was she weak after all? Patriarchal society looked at her and saw nothing more than a jar to be filled and emptied by the man. Because she was cracked, they assumed she could not do her job. She, however, believed she was stronger than all of them—stronger than the foolish patriarchal society that lost every battle with life yet kept its head held high, boasting of its own cowardice and laziness while marginalizing women and relegating them to second place.

One day despair overcame her and sorrow sank deep. She wondered why the wise man insisted on carrying her every day when he knew she was cracked. Whenever he returned home, she held no water for him to use; only the

intact jar delivered water. She sighed, bitterness mingling with a hidden determination and stubborn resilience.

“My crack makes me unable to hold water—not even a single drop. I am not fit to be a jar. Then why am I a jar at all?”

She felt that something within her distinguished her from the intact vessel. There was a secret strength whispering that she would one day do something great and meaningful. Despite her crack, she would endure; she would not be the failure the intact jar believed her to be, a vessel unfit for its intended purpose and useful for nothing. The voice echoed inside her, ringing through the fissure and dropping leaves of strength, as though the crack had made her more singular, more independent, and more distinctive than anyone else.

The cracked jar resolved to trust the voice and hear its echo: *Your crack is the secret of your greatness*. Yet how? The voice kept repeating itself; the crack seemed to groan along with it, whispering confidently: “Be the stronger one. Your crack is proof of your uniqueness and your productivity! It produces; it plants; it will harvest.”

Although she felt some confidence in this thought, anxiety, confusion, and despair still possessed her. She asked the voice inside her, “How can that be when I am cracked? I believe you, but what path will take me there? And when will it happen?”

The voice answered with absolute silence—with emptiness and stillness. Winds of ambition and curiosity stirred inside her. She decided to ask the wise man, her question veiled in confusion, sorrow, bitterness, and a carefully maintained composure.

“Why do you insist on carrying me back and forth every day, wise man, when you know full well that I cannot carry even a drop of water? You take me home daily, knowing that I have no water inside me and that only the intact jar can pour any out.”

The wise man smiled tenderly. He stroked the crack with gentle fingers and profound care, as though he held a precious treasure.

“I hold on to you because I do not see the crack in you. I see what lies beyond it. I am certain that without your crack you would not have become the heroine. You are a magnificent spirit, singular in your very being, rare in what you have achieved.”

He placed the jar on his shoulder and carried her to a lush garden, full of the colors of creativity and beauty. The garden pulsed with woven novels, literary poems, and a fertility no eye had ever witnessed.

Then the wise man turned toward the side where the intact jar was carried. There he found a desolate yellow wasteland, like a desert of the soul. The intact jar produced only stagnation and acceptance; not a single drop of creativity had fallen from her to water the world.

The Wise Man: "My cracked jar, I see what lies beyond your fissure. Your crack was the source of light and creativity. You watered the world with your pain; your deficiency made you surpass others. Instead of seeing you as incomplete, they tremble before the completeness of your crack, and feel deficient beside the strength of your will, which turned a wound into a message.

"You are a whole number that refused division except by itself. You turned inward around your crack and wound, not to weep over your fate, surrender, or fear anyone, but to develop yourself. You turned your fissure into flowing water, a spring that watered this barren land with your creativity until it blossomed into a lush garden. You gasped in amazement when you saw its beauty. Without your singular crack, the fruit could never have ripened.

"Your crack, my beloved and precious jar, makes those who think themselves complete feel deficient beside you. Your crack has slaughtered their complacency, cutting them apart like a sharp blade and scattering their pieces beneath your feet. It is the price of your brilliance and creativity. The very thing they mistook for a flaw made them look like dwarfs beside you. Your crack raised you and diminished them; it honored you and humiliated them. It quenched your thirst and left them thirsty. It lit your way and darkened their nights. Your crack cracked them open.

"Your crack was a powerful giant they could not stand against. It became a symbol of defiance and defeated them all. Every day it roared in their faces, terrifying them and declaring that they were nothing but drums—noise on the outside, emptiness within—producing only boredom and yawns. Your crack became the whip that made them shrink before you. It created your grandeur and awe; it became the bridge by which you crossed above them all. Your precious crack frightened them and lifted you. It was your fortress of safety. It turned their alleged completeness into a visible, shameful defect, while the deficiency they imagined in you became a perfection plain even to the blind."

The wise man turned again to the side where the intact jar was carried and found it barren, yellow, and desolate. She had never let even a drop fall. She was merely a container that carried water and poured it into another container, producing neither fruit nor flowers. She could never create what the cracked jar had made: a lush garden, a paradise alive with creativity and art. On her side of the path she had produced only a wasteland. One day she would leave the world without a trace, unlike the cracked jar. She had brought nothing new; she was simply a vessel whose supposed completeness was deficiency itself—an empty completeness, a disabled completeness, incapable of anything creative or beautiful. She had always believed herself whole, until she saw the flourishing garden watered by her sister's crack and learned the truth.

Philosophical Conclusion: The Declaration of the "Whole Number One"

The cracked jar wept with joy and understanding. She realized that the creativity with which she watered the world—writing, literature, and art—was a garden grown from her inner fissure.

The crack had created a wholeness that false perfection could never provide. It was a bridge that carried her to the summit while others remained stagnant in their imagined completeness.

"So I now proclaim my philosophy: like Dostoevsky, I love humanity in the abstract, but I hate human beings as individuals and cannot bear the bonds of partnership.

"I am the whole number one in the equation of existence. I accept division only by myself. I am an individual; I do not love even numbers or partnership. I find my world in solitude. This is no mere mathematical equation but a profound philosophical declaration: the crack gave birth to life, not death. Those who appear sound and complete on the outside are dead within; they are deficient and have nothing with which to nourish the world."

The Cracked Jar: "You see solitude as denial, while I see it as wholeness and a dissolving into the self."

The cracked jar stood proud and confident. "Now I know that my intuition was right. The voice that whispered of my strength now rings with unmatched confidence. My crack gave me the will to continue my education to the very end and drove me into the fierce struggle for divorce and freedom. These obstacles are not signs of deficiency; they are the stakes to which I tie my creativity. You confronted nothing, so you produced nothing."

She understood the truth: her crack was not a defect, but her true, indivisible identity. With dignity she declared:

"I now proclaim my uniqueness. I am the whole number in the equation; I accept division only by myself, and I will not share my being with another number. This is not selfishness, but the wholeness of a self born to live within its own world. Like Dostoevsky, I love humanity as an abstract idea, but I hate human beings as individuals and reject every chain that obstructs my individuality. I now water the world with my flowering crack, while those who falsely call themselves complete remain dead within, diminished before the abundance of my light."

End of reflection

I AM THE WHOLE NUMBER ONE

I am the whole number one in the equation of existence. I accept division only by myself. I am an individual; I do not care for even numbers or partnership. I find my world in solitude. This is not merely a mathematical equation, but a profound philosophical statement: the crack gave birth to life, not death. Those who appear sound and complete on the outside are, in truth, dead within—deficient, unable to nourish anything.

“I see solitude as a refusal,” someone says, “but I see it as wholeness and a dissolving into the self.”

Now I know my intuition was right. The voice that once whispered of my strength rings out with confidence and vigor. My crack gave me the will to pursue my education to the last moment and drove me into the fierce struggle for divorce and freedom. These obstacles are not signs of deficiency; they are the stakes from which I hang my creativity. You have faced nothing, and so you have produced nothing.

I now proclaim my individuality: I am the whole number one in the equation. I accept division only by myself and will not share my being with another number. This is not selfishness, but the wholeness of a self born to do without the world. Like Dostoevsky, I love humanity as an abstract concept, but I hate human beings as individuals and reject every bond that constrains my singularity. I water the world with my flowering crack, while those who falsely call themselves complete remain dead within, impoverished before the abundance of my light.

End of reflection

THE SPIRAL DECEPTION

She hurried into her room as though she were a commander who had made a decisive choice, or an adventurer compelled to take a necessary risk. She seized her wallet, sat on the sofa, and drew out a banknote worth a substantial amount—not a fortune, perhaps, but enough to buy some of the things she needed. It could at least pay for the antidepressant she had been taking for months, or cover a visit to the dentist she regularly saw to check the teeth that had begun to erode, with decay eating into some of her molars.

All of this passed before her like a film while she held the banknote and stared at it in silence, a silence roaring with questions and a torrent of conflicting thoughts, coated in the rust of aversion and disgust. She squeezed the note between her hands until it crumpled like the face of a centenarian, then pressed it harder still. She remained on the sofa, staring at it with flat, indifferent eyes, like the faded eyes of a dilapidated house coated in dust.

Boredom mingled with revulsion. The drums inside her mind began to pound faster and faster, their rhythm racing toward the wrinkled banknote lying on the floor. In a flash, before she could hesitate, she picked it up. Her decision was made. With anger and disgust, she tore the note into pieces, turning it into a paper corpse. The scent of banknotes seemed to rise from the shredded remains and fill the room until she felt she was choking on it.

“An illusion, an illusion! Nothing but an illusion. It is the illusion of control that a colored piece of paper grants you. Money is not a virtue to pursue; it is a narcissistic curse, a great deception. It makes you look rich while stealing

your honor, conscience, and morals from you day after day. And despite my deep hatred of it, I am afraid of losing it. This is a coercive relationship: we often need what we hate, because we are forced to."

The Spiral of Money: The Hand-to-Hand Game

Looking at the fragments of the dead banknote, she addressed it directly.

"You are a glittering deception, and in the end you are nothing. Look at yourself. You used to spin and slide from hand to hand, promising every hand that held you its wishes fulfilled and its hopes achieved. Whoever possessed you believed they held the most powerful weapon, a shield to protect them, an Aladdin's lamp that would grant every desire and fulfill every ambition. Why not? They believed they carried a deadly weapon in their grasp, moving toward their goal with bitterness on their lips and sorrow in their eyes—yet they remained subject to your will. They could reach what they wanted only through you, you wretched banknote.

"And now you are a torn corpse at my feet. Rot. Go to hell! You slip slyly from one hand and roll into another, passing from hand to hand. Every hand, every finger that clutches you believes it holds an Aladdin's lamp. With the lightness of a professional thief, you offer empty promises. You persuade the hand that has acquired you that you have granted its wishes and helped it achieve what it sought. Then, with your familiar, malicious slipperiness, you slide into another hand and offer the same promise, creating the same illusion. You pass like a cloud into yet another hand, then circle back to the very same hand, repeating the same performance and making the same promises. In the end, nothing—nothing but suggestion. You merely make people feel that they have gained what they wanted, achieved something through you, obtained what they needed or dreamed of. But it is suggestion, nothing more. You yourself keep slipping around the same circle, and they continue living the same illusion.

"It is a closed loop. The fingers and hands that clutch you imagine they are moving forward. The beginning is not zero but the bank or vault where the note is first printed. An employee receives it as 'profit,' then hands it to a merchant, who passes it to someone else in a shopping basket. Eventually, the very same note—or one like it—returns to the bank to be distributed again. Everyone sells; everyone buys; everyone pays for the illusion of profit with a piece of their soul. A contest takes from the competitor to pay the judge; the winner then gives away what they won to pursue another goal, and the money returns to the business that feeds it back into the larger circle. The circle keeps spinning and making everyone dizzy without creating anything real. It produces only slaves who lose their consciences to the lure of wealth."

The shredded banknote smiled at her—a sly yellow smile tinted with the color of control. With arrogant pride, it replied:

“But you need me. You cannot deny it. Without me, you cannot live; you cannot eat or drink or find the medicine you need to stay alive. You cannot go to the dentist or the market. You cannot buy a dress or a blanket to protect you from the bitter cold. Without me, you cannot own an air conditioner or even a fan to save you from the burning heat. In short, without me you will be lost, perhaps destroyed. However fiercely you resist, in the end you will submit to my power.”

The Silent Dialogue: Money and Nothingness

She stared at the note with hatred.

“That is precisely why I hate you. I do not deny that, unfortunately, I need you. But often we need things we do not love—even things we detest—and we submit to their control. Life has forced me to live under the lash of your power. You whip me with my need for food, drink, medicine, and doctors. Life has placed me beneath your lashes and made you the executioner who broke my back beneath this unbearable burden. I chose you, but I never loved you. There is a vast distance between what we willingly choose and what we are forced to need.

“You forced me to clutch you between my fingers until you felt like a knife, your sharp blade tearing into my hands and every finger’s artery. I have always hated you; I truly despise you. You took my freedom, bound me, and subjected me to your iron chains. Oh, how those chains have cut my wrists! Why should I keep them when they have robbed me of liberty? Now the time has come for revenge. What a despicable power you are, you piece of paper!”

The Spiral Circle: The Game of Illusion

“Money is no treasure; it is an exhausting circular trick. Look at it: the circle turns and spins without creating anything real. It is an endless hand-to-hand game. An employee takes a salary from the bank and gives it to a merchant; the merchant uses it to pay obligations, and the bank takes it back again, only to redistribute it among the laboring slaves in every field.”

The torn banknote confronted her with the arrogance of a flirtatious woman.

“And even the freedom you flaunt—I can subdue it. By controlling the whole world, I can bring freedom under my sway and buy it with my influence. I can reduce it to nothing, make it my captive, and force it to kneel before my power, my glitter, and my irresistible seductions.”

She met its gaze with defiance and pride, like a storm blazing with fire.

“Be quiet, you contemptible thing! Do not put the word *freedom* into your filthy mouth, which knows only degradation, domination, and the subjugation of the weak. Freedom is too sublime to be bought by your supposed seduction. You may be able to control everything else, but not freedom. It is your sworn enemy, greater and loftier than you, like a towering

structure your kind can never reach. Before it, you are a rusted matchstick beside a skyscraper, an ant beneath the feet of a giant elephant. What do you know of freedom? It alone has escaped your chains. It alone has understood what it means to do without you, abandoned you with contempt, turned its back, and trampled you beneath its feet. Do not dare utter its pure name with your filthy tongue.

“If all the treasures of the earth you carry were laid before a hungry lion or a wolf waiting for prey, would they care? Would you stir even a single thing within them? No. In nature’s eyes, you are nothing—mere matter worth less than the grandeur of moonlight or the courage of a mother defending her child. Yet humans, in their foolishness, kill, steal, and sell their honor for you!”

The Torn Banknote (a narcissistic illusion): “I am the game, human beings. I am neither virtue nor evil; I am the symbolic chain you chose for me. You are the ones who wish to kill, and I provide the justification. You are the ones who wish to stray, and I provide the cover. You invented my circle to enjoy a temporary illusion of possession, then you blame me! There are no slaves in nature—except you, my slaves.”

Climax: The Madness of Doing Without, and Sacred Art

She spoke with pride blended with sorrow and bitterness.

“I lived beneath the burden of this noble contempt for money, yet I forced myself to need it in a world that recognizes nothing but currency. Then I remembered the principle of doing without, practiced by Tolstoy when he possessed everything, while I practice it possessing nothing. I want to prove that doing without is an inward decision, not a material condition.

“I know that, in other people’s eyes, tearing you apart and turning you into a lifeless corpse was an act of madness. From the world’s perspective, that is what it was. But for me it was renunciation and revelation—indeed, a sacred art that grants my self another life, one I can live truthfully, not bound and humiliated by you. I have declared to the universe that I can do without your game and refuse to let a currency I hate control me. I humiliated you and tore you to pieces until you became a dead body, useless for anything, and I did it at the very moment I needed you most.”

The banknote’s remnants looked at her in anger and astonishment.

“Why did you do this, you fool? How stupid you are! You could have gained so much by keeping me. What would you have lost by holding on to me? On the contrary, you could have bought what you needed and achieved at least some of your goals. But through your foolishness, you have made me worthless and useless.”

Her eyes flashed with triumph; her voice stood tall with pride.

“See? See how trivial you are! A simple act of tearing made you nothing. Your place is in the rubbish; even rubbish can be recycled, but you cannot. That is why you are sad, enraged, and weeping: I have made you feel your insignificance and worthlessness. A tiny crack in you, a drop of ink, a spot of tea or coffee, or hot water burning your sensitive skin can wrinkle you and make you defective. Then no one wants you; everyone refuses to take you in their hands, even though those hands once dreamed of possessing you as the most precious thing in existence. With the slightest crack, wrinkle, or stain, they kick you aside and recoil from you, though they once longed to hold you. How trivial you are! You are only a wretched banknote, cheap and worthless; you cannot tolerate the smallest flaw because one little defect strips you of all your value.

“Do you know why? Because you have no value or meaning to begin with. And now, shamelessly, you want to compare yourself with the breeze of freedom, with its greatness and immortality? Never! How far the earth is from the Pleiades. Freedom is the act of letting go of your cursed chain. No crack can break it; no knife or scissors can tear it; no hand, no weapons, no force can weaken it. It does not bend or grow faint. It is a shining star in the vast universe, beyond the reach of hands. It is hope’s beam, enduring life, true strength—not the deceptive strength with which you delude those who possess you.

“You say I cannot live without you. I answer that even if I owned all the wealth in the world, I would eventually die like every biological creature. Sooner or later, death is inevitable—at least as far as we know. What would you do for me then? You might buy the finest and most expensive food, but you could not buy the appetite or desire to eat it. You might buy the world’s most expensive bed, but you could not buy sleep or peace of mind. You can buy medicine, but you cannot buy life. Even if medicine prolongs life for a while, in the end I will perish and go to nothingness. If this end is unavoidable, then, if death is inevitable, it is shameful to live as a coward. That is why I was brave enough to commit what you call madness: I tore you apart with my own nails at the very moment I needed you most, to free myself from your cursed chain.”

Conclusion: A Declaration of Inner Wealth

The happiest person is the one who has nothing to lose—the one who, when struck in the eye, can say, “It was already ruined.” I now live rich in renunciation, not in possessions.

“I see sorrow plainly behind the smile of Elon Musk, the richest man in the world. You could not give him even a drop of true happiness; you offered him only a faint smile, painted over with hidden sadness. You are disabled and helpless, so do not be arrogant or tyrannical. You are a human invention, and one day people will probably replace you with something else. You are a slippery, illusory mirage, and that is all you are.

“I know that unhappiness inhabits the hearts of those who possess treasures and fear losing them. I choose to be ‘poor and rich’ at once: poor in the silly, sticky circle of your game, rich in the principle of renunciation that cannot be bought. You are a great deception, but tearing you apart is an art understood only by those who have looked absurdity in the eye with certainty.

“I declare openly that you, money, are nothing but a narcissistic illusion, giving slaves a false sense of control over their masters. We live in an age in which human beings have made a colored piece of paper into a god, worshipped through meanness, theft, and the trading of honor. You tempt people into becoming scoundrels and deviants, though in truth you are nothing beside nature’s innocence.

“All the evil committed in your name—from a woman selling her body under material temptation to a person killing for a fortune—is done in the name of this hollow entity. If Elon Musk’s or Bill Gates’s money were placed before a hungry wolf or a predatory lion, it would not move the animal at all. Nature recognizes no such illusion, but humans have chosen to be slaves who despise their chains and yet fear losing them. We are forced into a relationship of hatred and servitude.

“If you tell me that tearing you into tatters was madness, I will tell you in return: this madness is my final certainty—that life is a short lease, that nothingness is the final sum, and that nothingness has no need for a single banknote.”

End of reflection

THE EMPTY HALF

Within a vast glass space, the world was divided into two halves. One half was illuminated—the full half. The other was empty, like a desert stripped even of its sand by a violent storm and a rushing flood, left without the slightest trace of anything except a void so transparent it was almost invisible.

The Glass's Paradox

The two halves stood facing each other inside a clear glass vessel divided into two worlds. The full half gleamed with the sparkle of naïve hope, while the empty half remained quiet, silent, and transparent.

The Full Half *(loudly, with shallow confidence):* "Look at me, you emptiness! I am certainty, tangible matter, proof to people that life contains goodness. Without me, the world would be nothingness. I am the source of ambition, the hope naïve people chase. You, empty half, are merely a symbol of failure and bitter pessimism. Why does no one wish to plunge into you?"

The Empty Half *(with deep philosophical calm, like a teacher who understands the truth, and an air of proud inquiry):* "Are you so certain of your status? Have you ever wondered why your optimism and your high expectations have disappointed so many people? Have you wondered why, after your false promises and rosy dreams—dreams that appear lovely while concealing a bleak darkness—some optimists have taken their own lives, or why those who were once optimistic have collapsed? Do you not understand

that you disappointed and shattered them? You turned their inner worlds into wastelands, until some threw themselves from high balconies or took lethal substances. All of this came from your deception and malice, you evasive fraud.

"You killed them. You made them run with all their strength, believing the road you laid before them was broad, smooth, paved, and open. Then, in the blink of an eye, they crashed into a hard, rotten, merciless wall and fell, broken. I, by contrast, do not need anyone to plunge into me. I am the truth that makes no promise only to betray it. I do not deceive them as you do. I am honesty and clarity. I do not let them down.

"You, the full half, wave a nonexistent treasure before the foolish. You lift their expectations into the open sky, only to crush them cruelly when they discover that your substance is no more than a temporary mirage. You are a decorated deception; I am an honest void from the beginning, and I will never betray anyone."

A Debate on Indifference and Suffering: The Strength of Pessimism

The Full Half: "You preach lazy indifference! You tell people to sit still and be pessimistic, while I call them to move and work. You hide your emptiness, weakness, and darkness behind these words, imagining they will protect you from my power, my glittering optimism, and my rosy dreams that bring happiness and stir people's energy. You are poor and can give nothing. What can nothingness and emptiness offer? You are a barren desert inhabited only by rats and snakes on its bleak sands, with wolves howling into solitude. You hide behind weakness and hang imaginary curtains around yourself, claiming to be honest and harmless. But you possess nothing: you are nonexistence, sadness, gloom, blackness, and darkness. I am splendor, a dazzling glimmer, and bright colors announcing the coming spring."

The Philosophical Argument: A Defense of Nothingness

The Empty Half *(with a sage's confident gaze and deep intellectual composure):* "You have just confessed, without realizing it, to your own naïve, childish arrogance and shallow, foolish enthusiasm. You speak with idiotic pride, like a glamorous fashion model in expensive clothes, walking along an elegant carpet toward her final steps—straight toward a deep pit hidden beneath roses the same color as the carpet.

"You slyly mix poison with honey, indifferent to the consequences. People fall while chasing your false pink mask. You yourself have admitted that you offer only rosy dreams and illusions. Truth glitters before them like a flash of light, calling out from afar and tempting them with bright, shining colors. They run breathlessly after this radiance, unaware that it conceals darkness, evil, and deadly poison wrapped in silver foil inside a luxurious candy. You are poison in honey, darkness inside what looks like brilliant light—or so it appears, and

so you deceive the innocent and naïve who drown in your sea of optimism and rosy dreams.

"My honesty warns them from the start. You do not understand that clarity is the wealth of the poor, and transparency is the riches of nothingness, despite what you believe. I do not deceive or promise lies as you do. I show them the snakes playing in my land; I do not hide them beneath flowers and roses until they suddenly bite without warning. I show them the scorpion's venom from the beginning. I show them the barren desert, with all its snakes, scorpions, gloom, and pessimism—but it can also inspire them.

"I inspire work and effort. This is not poverty, but striving. My message is simple: here is reality as it is. Be careful, take precautions, and arm yourselves for the struggle so that you may win—or at least remain safe instead of living with regret. I compel them to strive rather than surrender to the deceptive complacency you encourage. You anesthetize them; I warn them. I make them work to turn my barren desert into a flourishing garden, heavy with blossoms and fruit, and I remind them to take every necessary precaution for their safety.

"I walk beside them quietly, step by step, with care and patience, whispering that danger may be approaching. They become more alert and cautious, stronger, more perceptive, and more insightful. I am a warning, not an anesthetic. I call them to work, think, and struggle, and not to be dazzled by glitter that leads only to regret and frustration. As long as they walk beside me, they are protected from disappointment and from running breathlessly after a mirage; they are protected from deception. They walk with me alert and watchful, rather than drugged by false hope. I urge them to leave their comfort zone, think, pay attention, strive, and take care.

"What does that have to do with your deception, false hopes, rosy dreams, and lies that leave behind only the dead, the suicidal, the murdered, the guilty, and the criminal? It is all because of you, you malicious deceiver! You tempt them into a trap, then stand laughing at their ruin with a miserable sense of triumph. What a fraud you are!"

The Full Half *(with arrogance wrapped in insolence and contempt):* "Do not deny it, my poor friend—or rather, my sworn enemy. The promises you call deceptive, false, dreamy, and illusory have benefited many people, including those you describe as dead, guilty, or destroyed. My so-called false promises have stirred the energy of countless people. Their rosy color gave them positive energy, made them dream and plan, and then act. Many achieved what you call my false promises: some amassed fortunes, enjoyed great success, and rose to the highest ranks and positions. They did so because they ran after me and my promises, which soothed and motivated them to achieve what they wanted."

The Empty Half *(with a sorrowful, sarcastic question):* "And what about the others? What if you compared those who followed you and escaped

drowning in their hopes and ambitions with those who drowned in your illusions, whose efforts shattered against your merciless rock of deception? You crushed their heads and bodies to pieces; some fell dead or were driven mad. Those you call victims of my gloom are your victims—the survivors of your deception who sought refuge in my sober sadness to protect themselves from your treachery.

"The gloom you accuse me of creating was made by your own hands—hands stained with the blood of the dreams and aims you slaughtered without mercy or pity. They found no refuge except in my warm, tender embrace. I had warned them from the beginning, but they ignored my call and ran, gasping, after your glittering deception. When you betrayed and slaughtered them, they returned to me in remorse and defeat, like a disobedient child who comes weeping into a mother's arms and begs forgiveness.

"Those who escaped you were rescued only by chance, fate, risk, deception, fraud, corruption, or wrongdoing—not because of you. They are a drop in an ocean of people you betrayed, deceived, and left dead or broken. You planted their despair, and I arrived afterward to harvest it, trying to remove its bitterness and replace it with truth to ease their pain.

"So what do you boast of, foolish, arrogant deceiver? I treated the wounds you inflicted. I call people to work, not merely to hope. From the suffering and grief you planted, I help produce art, beauty, and creativity. They came running to me with the thorns of your false roses embedded in them, and in my honest embrace they turned their pain into art. I made their sorrow a bridge of tears leading them to the highest peaks of artistic achievement. I turned suffering into art and beauty without cosmetic cover-ups or patches like yours.

"I taught them to see light emerging from the darkness of sadness and pessimism. I am beautiful, noble sorrow; I am a symbol of creativity, a flood from which they draw their art and invention until they reach the summit. Here I am, with no alteration, distortion, deception, or poison hidden in honey. I am here to heal, not to trick. I teach that suffering—the suffering you caused—can be a source of inspiration and beauty, and that sorrow and the cracks of life can inspire progress. I do not exchange or falsify the truth; I treat the wound. I am the physician who removes pain and turns the wound into a bridge to success, one people can cross calmly, confidently, and with dignity. I make wholeness from deficiency and permanence from the crack. I am the healing physician who sees beauty in sorrow and finds a motive and light in suffering, drawing thought from the depths without deceptive glitter or reckless illusion.

"So tell me, which of us is better? You are the murderous deceiver, the criminal; I am the healing physician. You are evil concealed behind a beautiful, imaginary mask, while I am the visible good that honestly points to the place of pain and presses upon the wound, forcing its owner out of

comfort and laziness into effort, so that they may discover happiness inside their scars and creativity inside their pain.

“I am renunciation and indifference. My lack of desperate pursuit is what draws goals toward me. Your impulsiveness, recklessness, and deceptive seduction drive people away from their goals, erecting a terrifying barrier between them and what they seek, then throwing them into an abyss of ruin until they die slowly or take their own lives after the violent shocks delivered by your dazzling promises. In the end, they find only a mirage. What are you after all this? Evil, contempt, shame, and disgrace wrapped in a glossy, ornate covering, prettified and patched up with illusion and lies. You should have been ashamed from the beginning instead of boasting of your recklessness, fraud, and vileness. My crack is the driving force; your glittering promises are the deep abyss, the deadly trap.

“I call for intelligence and calm reason. I follow the principle of the teacher Cioran: the only way to obtain everything is to do without everything. I am the indifferent one who attracts goals; I do not chase them like a naïve optimist. When I work to fill myself, I do it quietly and patiently, in the spirit of Taoism, because I expect no reward from you, arrogant full half. I am the zero point that cannot be disappointed.”

The Full Half *(with anxiety, collapse, and defeat in its voice):* “But I hide pain and failure beneath a layer of hope to keep life going! I did not mean to deceive or do harm. I only cover the shame of pain and beautify suffering with bright colors so the exhausted soul can find comfort and rest. I do not lie; I only adorn things. I make them beautiful.”

The Empty Half *(embodying the beauty of suffering):* “I do the opposite. I strip pain bare! I reveal suffering as a weapon of awakening and a motive for self-discovery. I tell you, full half, that digging deep into the garment of suffering is where hidden pleasure and true happiness can be found. I am the true teacher who forces the heart to descend into its depths, purify the soul, and remove the false mask from supposed beauty. You are a naïve child. You do more than lie or decorate; you kill and poison. You are a deadly poison, a perfectly engineered deception at its most malicious. You feed people false hopes stuffed with every kind of illusion and poison, leading them toward failure and darkness. I, by contrast, am the logical pessimist who sees sorrow as a fine thread leading toward light.”

A Cry of Choice

The Empty Half: “I call for conscious choice! I invite people to look at me and come into this emptiness, which will not deceive them. Let them learn that failure, pain, and suffering can become driving forces; that deficiency can be a singular kind of wholeness. I am the empty half, yet I am more truthful and intelligent, and creativity springs from my silent depths.”

The Empty Half *(in a calm, philosophically devastating voice):* "You are not evidence, but a carefully crafted deception, naïve full half. You wave a treasure before people so they chase a mirage, only to discover on arrival that you are worth nothing. I do not call for passivity; I call for intelligent movement. I practice renunciation so that the goal may run toward me, instead of my panting pursuit ensuring that I am disappointed. You make life frantic and anxious; I make it contemplative and wise."

The Full Half *(stammering, visibly tense):* "But I give people hope for tomorrow!"

The Empty Half *(crushing shallow logic):* "What kind of hope? Yours is the cruelest form of disappointment! You raise expectations to the heavens, and when they fall, the fracture is twice as severe. Unlike you, I am honest. I am empty and promise no one anything. I am the zero point that teaches people to build themselves, slowly and patiently, with reason—not with the breathless excitement of a naïve child. Your optimism is a deficiency of awareness."

The Full Half *(broken, finally aware of the weakness of its argument):* "Ah, empty half... your evidence is irrefutable. I thought I was victorious because I was full, but now I see that my fullness was weakness, illusion, and disappointment that led to final defeat. I feel powerless before your truth and awareness. I surrender, in reason, to the wisdom of nothingness and the beauty of conscious pessimism."

The Empty Half (final word): "Look at me! I am the empty half, yet I am more truthful, more intelligent, and more certain. I invite you to enter this emptiness, which will not deceive you, and learn that deficiency is the beginning of a truly individual wholeness. I am victorious because I never ran after an illusion."

End of reflection

SECRETS OF THE NIGHT

In a corner of the city, where wet pavements met the dim glow of streetlights, lived a woman named Layla. She was strong and rebellious, drawn to art, literature, music, and the profound mysteries of the night.

Layla *(gazing at the star-studded sky):* "Night, you are my only friend. In you I find shelter from the storms of the outside world. No one understands me as you do."

The Night *(whispering gently):* "Why do you refuse love, Layla? Why do you keep your distance from men and choose solitude?"

Layla *(smiling sadly):* "I have tried love, only to discover the pain it carries within it. Every experience was a harsh lesson, and every man held a secret that wounded me. I refuse to become a victim again."

The Night: "But love is not always pain. It can be a refuge; it can be inspiration. Do you not see how the stars dance in my sky?"

Layla *(contemplating the stars):* "I see them, but I prefer to dance alone. In my dance I find freedom; in my words I find my voice. I do not need a man to complete me. I am complete as I am. I find myself in solitude. My solitude completes me; it does not diminish me. It opens worlds to me, not just one world. I find life and wholeness within myself, in the emptiness of my solitude—a space that I see and feel as the summit of fullness.

"True deficiency and emptiness lie among these masked people, behind their false human faces. I find loneliness only amid human noise, hypocrisy, empty

courtesies, and their ridiculous displays. I become a feather tossed about by the wind, battered by people's words and hateful voices, heavy upon my weary self. People exhaust me with their stupidity, lies, pursuit of self-interest, deceit, and hypocrisy. I find myself only in your warm embrace, night. I take refuge in you and confide what lies in my heart. As I contemplate your silent stillness, I find honesty in it. I contemplate the silence and emptiness wrapped in your dark cloak, where your silver stars shine.

"I know how to live through your precious hours. I wish they would never end beneath the scorching sun of day. I see honesty in your stillness, silence, and darkness. Under the moonlight, your quiet corners seem to whisper to me of the people who filled the streets, roads, and alleys throughout the day with the noise of their lies and deceit.

"There was the vendor bellowing as he chased money, raising prices and cheating with his scales to profit. There was the young man meeting a girl and walking with her through crowded streets, only to lure her behind trees away from the noise, deceive her into giving him a kiss—or more—and leave her running after him in alarm. There were murderers and criminals, thieves and prowlers, filling the streets all day with lies, sweat, filth, crimes, falsehood, deceit, and cruelty. Innocent animals wandered among them, confused and unable to find help. All they found was a man carrying a stick to whip a mule or donkey into moving faster as he wished. They saw a cat or dog searching through rubbish for a scrap of spoiled food, while human beings passed without the slightest concern. Some even threw stones at the animals or beat a cat to drive it away from a shop, home, or possession. What scoundrels they are!

"But you, tender night, seem to record all of this in your nocturnal memory and store it in your treasury of calm and stillness, colored by the silver light of your moon and studded with your sparkling stars. You reveal people's secrets to me, expose them, and seem to tell them: 'Silence! Be quiet, humans. Go to sleep; perhaps you will never wake. I have come to silence you and quiet the evil with which you polluted the earth all day. You ruined it. Now be quiet and sleep. Leave the streets and roads; retreat to your beds. The voice now belongs to me; words give way to my stillness and calm.'

"This is how you whisper to me each night, dear night. Truths hidden and dissolved beneath sunlight and human clamor are revealed. You bring them forth honestly through your stillness. Your silence is the greatest witness against them. Their fingerprints appear clearly on roads, walls, houses, balconies, and streets in your calm and quiet. Through silence, you reveal what they committed all day, keeping it as a secret between us beneath your moon's light and the sparkle of your stars. You tell me what they did by day. You are my friend, the hand that comforts my shoulder and wraps around my chest with tenderness. I find myself only in your stillness, escaping the human noise that engulfs me during daylight. I lose myself in that din until

your gentle hands come to lift me onto a carpet of moonlight and carry me far away from people and their daytime clamor. Their day is theirs, not mine. I belong to the night; I am a nocturnal creature. You and my solitude are the two friends I have chosen, and I need no others."

The Night: "But solitude is heavy, Layla. Do you know the danger hidden in an artist's isolation? You might lose yourself in the shadows of your own thoughts."

Layla: "I know. But do not worry about me, tender night. I know very well how to enjoy you and my solitude in your depths. The night has its own people, and I am one of them—one who knows how to enjoy its hours and fill every minute with pleasure. I know how to return to myself within the folds of your stillness, and how to flee toward you from the reality of the day. I know how to live you as I wish, not as foolish humans want me to.

"You know, night, that I do not fall asleep quickly, and I do not want to lose a single minute wandering through your quiet hours, your sweet music, your magnificent symphonies. Sometimes I think, sometimes remember, sometimes smile and contemplate, and sometimes I feel pain.

"With you, night, I see a separate world, a reality unlike the harsh, coarse indifference of daytime. By day I see a cruel man holding a thick stick and whipping people to make them work—by any means, whether through theft, cheating, deceit, or murder. But with you, I find a different world, inhabited by another kind of being: more transparent, more delicate, more harmonious, like a musical scale. I am one of your inhabitants, night. I wish you would never disappear, that the sun of your day would never rise, and that your hours would stretch on and on.

"Your roads are long, and your paths cover the earth. Everything in you surges fiercely: feelings, tears, and sincere confessions far removed from the noise and crowds of day. Everything in you is silent yet eloquent, honest and transparent, whispering with a freedom rarely found by daylight. Night, my friend, you reveal feelings as they truly are. That is why I chose only you as my friend and was content with you instead of all humanity—especially that detestable creature called a male, or a man, if he deserves the name.

"I chose myself. I chose to be me. I write my poems, paint my pictures, and play the strings of my heart. The darker it gets, the more inspiration I find. In you, night, I discover refuge, where I can become whoever I wish."

The Night *(deeply moved, in a melancholy musical tone):* "You reflect a unique beauty, but remember: in every darkness there is light. Yet I wonder each night, as we whisper to each other: are you afraid to open your heart to a man again?"

Layla *(confident and defiant, gazing deeply into the night):* "I fear nothing. I have simply chosen to live in my own world. I do not want to be bound by other people's emotions. I want freedom—to live my moments as I please. I

chose this willingly, with my full consent, and I believe my choice is wise and brings me happiness."

The Night *(whispering with admiration and encouragement):* "Your freedom lies in your strength. But remember that life is not only solitude. A day may come when you feel longing, when you need a partner with whom to share these secrets."

Layla smiled gently, her sweetness dissolving on her lips like a piece of rock candy.

"Perhaps. But until that day, I will keep dancing with you, night. I will write you my secrets and sing you my dreams. You are my refuge and my friend. Within you, dormant consciences awaken; your pillows bear witness to everything I tried to conceal of my distress throughout the day. With you I break free from daylight's chains, soaring like a bird in your sky, like a butterfly fluttering through your silver fields.

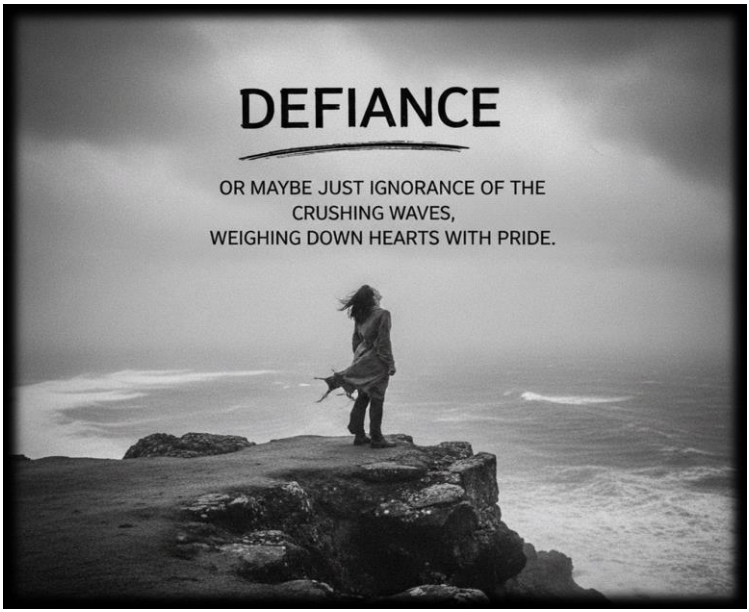
"With you, night, a new passion is born every time—a mad confession, a decision made firmly during the day that soon collapses and loses its power with the last ray of daylight, when your footsteps begin knocking at the earth to announce your captivating arrival.

"With you, night, I know the difference between one hour and the next, and the flavor of each. I know when the call to prayer begins, when it is time to listen to and enjoy the voice of Fairuz, and when to end those melodies with a musical piece that breaks your rare, beautiful silence and adds to its beauty—a piece that surpasses all words. Only with you do I know wonder, because I belong to your world. With you I become intoxicated by words. Beneath your folds I flirt with the moon, and the stars flirt with me every night. With you I live a complete life that lacks nothing, a life in which I have done without everything and everyone, without ever leaving my balcony where your moon appears, or my bed shining with your silver stars.

"Only with you, night, do I understand that the happy ones are the people of the night. The night alone."

At that moment, the night wrapped Layla in its warm embrace, as if whispering that a world of success, glory, and goals still lay before her. It assured her she would reach what she sought, that she differed from everyone around her, and that she wrote for tomorrow and for the future. She was its favorite shining, passionate star, a star beyond the ordinary, and every secret she carried contained a kind of immortality.

End of reflection



STUBBORN DENIAL

Scene One: The Sermon

Sheikh Hassan stood in the mosque pulpit, his voice thundering beneath the golden dome, his eyes flashing with fire.

Hassan *(quoting a prophetic saying):* "…The eyes commit adultery, and the adultery of the eyes is looking!"

He continued, raising his voice: "Woman is nakedness; her hair is temptation, and her body is a fire that burns away faith! Remember the Prophet's words—peace be upon him: 'I have left no temptation more harmful to men than women.'"

The congregation nodded in agreement. Some murmured, "Amen." But among the last rows sat Yara, his former colleague. She was wrapped in a black cloak as dark as a moonless night, and a matching scarf covered her head. Yet golden strands had slipped free and flowed over her shoulders like a waterfall, escaping the restraint of a hair clip. Outwardly, she had been compelled to wear the hijab to enter the mosque. Beneath the cloak she wore a blue dress that brushed her smooth, pale knees; the uncovered curves of her legs seemed to glow with a white light bright enough to illuminate the women's section.

The women listening to Sheikh Hassan's sermon from the screened gallery turned toward her. Yara covered her bare legs and gathered her golden hair

after receiving their fiery looks, full of resentment, envy, and disgust at her presence.

Yara did not wear the hijab by choice. She had put it on merely to gain entry to the mosque, even though she did not pray and had little trust in this religion—or in religions generally. She was skeptical of them all. To her, religious rituals were crumbling, outdated myths that held back progress and civilization. She saw people living by the fantasy of an imaginary being with supernatural powers who supposedly controlled everything. What a display of dependency and naïve thought!

Yet she dared not say any of this openly. She lived in a merciless society that might kill her or imprison her; at the very least, it would ostracize her and shower her with looks of revulsion and loathing. Though she was confident she was right and believed she had scientific and logical evidence to support her view, she kept quiet. She was educated, well-read, and a researcher at a scientific research center. Inwardly, she often mocked her colleagues: how could people work in scientific research and still believe religion's nonsense and myths, unsupported by any logical or scientific evidence? These were nothing more than tales and claims without proof.

But she limited herself to silence. A passing glance, a momentary look of surprise or anger, was the most she dared offer—an expression that seemed to deny the reality before her, as though the beliefs her colleagues defended with such passion were merely fantasies, driven by the fear of the unknown into which they had been raised, by greed for reward, and by fear of punishment. It was the carrot-and-stick principle. Yet all the while, believers remained certain and stubborn, as though they had died dozens of times and seen conclusive evidence proving their convictions.

Sometimes Yara sympathized with them; at other times she feared them. She was forced to flatter and pretend in order to protect her own life, the safety of her family, and those she loved. She did not even dare tell her relatives about her doubts and thoughts.

Then Hassan's voice rang in her ears. She watched him from the women's gallery, preaching with fervor. She had come only to see him—or perhaps to challenge him, to wield the power of her femininity and announce that she could bring him to his knees in a contest he was bound to lose. Perhaps she had come to mock his words, which he delivered with the confidence of someone who had conducted hundreds of scientific studies and conclusive experiments to prove them.

He had been her colleague at work. His office had stood beside hers before she resigned for good, choosing to devote herself to research online. Yara disliked the constraints of employment and preferred independent work. She had resigned after enduring insinuations, gossip, and spiteful hints from her male and female colleagues.

Now she stared at Hassan in silent defiance. Her beautiful, sleepy eyes—framed by long, naturally captivating lashes—sparked with amusement, mockery, indifference, and a sense of victory. The sermon ended, as did the prayer she had performed more out of playacting than conviction; she had never believed in it. Men and women streamed out of the mosque into the street.

Then his eyes met hers for an instant. Hassan felt as though lightning had pierced his chest. His blood boiled, his heart shook, and the earth seemed to tremble beneath his feet.

He swallowed, his voice trembling slightly, and remembered his own sermon: "Let them wear loose, flowing clothes and be modest, for modesty is part of faith…" Yet he continued to look at her despite everything, denying to himself what he felt. "No… I do not love. I am not infatuated. Love is desire, and desire is the fire of Hell."

Yara's voice echoed in his memory—her doubts about religion, her opinions, and her rejection of what he held to be true. She had confided these things to him alone. Though he rejected her ideas, he had kept her secret out of fear for her safety. Whenever he remembered her laughter and the sweet ring of her voice, which struck his heart before it reached his ears like a golden anklet flashing with the brightness of a sharp blade, his feelings collapsed. A tightening band seemed to close around his throat, silencing him until words dried up. He found himself defending her and covering for her.

She knew she could bring him under the spell of her beauty and femininity. But he always fled, while she laughed; he ran from her like a terrified mouse. He was the dignified sheikh, a man who would never yield or soften before such a temptation. He was fortified by religion against this wicked devil. How could he ever surrender? Impossible!

Yet Yara enjoyed tormenting him. She knew that he was hers in his heart, and that he concealed his weakness behind the mask of religion. Inside, he was a lovesick, devoted, passionate man. Outwardly, he denied and resisted; inwardly, he remained in endless torment.

He continued to ask himself, trembling with fear: Did he desire her? Then came what seemed to him the obvious answer: No. He neither loved nor desired her. It was impossible that he could be in love. He had a wife and children. His wife was virtuous and religious. How could he love a woman who rejected everything about religion that he regarded as truth and certainty? Had he gone mad? Was he possessed by a cursed, rebellious devil?

Scene Two: The Dream

That night, Hassan slept restlessly on his white pillow.

In his dream, the question surrounded him, clouded and unresolved: *Could it be that I love you? If loving you is only a possibility, why has my blood*

surged so wildly? His throat seemed to close around the answer; even his mouth fell silent and died as he dreamed. “My heart has fled behind your veil,” he murmured, “to kiss whatever it can reach of you.” He kept asking himself: *Do I love you?*

A version of the poet Nizar Qabbani appeared, taking Hassan’s own form and speaking in his lyrical voice:

“I do not love, I do not fall in love… I do not desire you—no, no…”

Hassan was astonished at himself. What a master he was at running away and denying! He had perfected the art of fleeing from her and displaying rejection before other people. Yet inside, every glance, every step, every whisper, every change in her voice made him paint beautiful pictures of her behind closed doors.

Sometimes he confessed his love to himself in secret, as thieves confess their crimes before judges. Then, suddenly, he would deny it, reject it, curse it, and insult it—as though he were an accused man behind bars, condemned to death after admitting his terrible crime, only to deny it at the last moment and pretend that he had been joking or insane, or that torture had forced him to make a false confession. This was how Sheikh Hassan always persuaded himself.

He would wake, seek refuge in God from the accursed devil, perform ablution, and pray, asking God to forgive his sins and accept his repentance for this invasion of his heart and every cell of his body—a force that seemed to overpower him without mercy or restraint.

But the dream returned again and again, like a malignant illness that refused to leave him. Thoughts pursued him through sleep. Yara appeared before him like a fresh flower or a dewdrop resting on a rose in the early morning.

He saw her sitting at her old desk at work, laughing and whispering, her eyes gleaming like two stars. He approached her and touched a strand of her golden hair.

Hassan in the dream *(with Nizar Qabbani’s voice of love):*

“If you drown in the river, my beloved, I will drown with you. If you burn in love, my beloved, I will burn with you.”

At night the pillow wept beneath his head, and stars floated above his bed. He whispered to her, “If a million people love you, I am one of them. If only one person loves you, know that it must be me. If no one loves you, know that I am dead.

“When I met you, I made peace with the world. I forgave those who had been absent and excused everyone who had left. Since I met you, nothing seems worth anger—except one thing: your absence.”

In his dream, that was how Hassan spoke to Yara from the moment she first resigned from work.

Then he saw himself suddenly grow cold and move away from her, whispering in a trembling voice: “I am afraid of the things that touch my heart, so I always run away from them—and from you. You are a sin, a curse of the devil wrapped in the beautiful white garment of an angel. You are my only naked truth, the cause of my ruin and God’s anger against me. I must run from you. I will run, surely.”

Then he took a step toward her, sorrowful and confused. “Why did you resign? Why did you leave work? How could you be so cruel as to throw me into the depths of ruin? I told myself it was an ordinary separation. Its effect would fade with time—or perhaps it would never fade. It was only a normal parting. But the question that keeps tormenting me, however often I try to expel it from my mind, is this: how did you manage to extinguish me when I was always the one who lit your way?”

Scene Three: A Conversation with the Pillow

Hassan laid his head on the pillow again, brushing it with his fingertips as though touching Yara’s soft cheek.

The Pillow *(in a calm, mocking feminine voice):* “Why are you sweating, Hassan? Is it because of your fiery sermon, or your feverish dream?”

Hassan *(muttering):* “Be quiet. You are only a piece of cloth. Do not try to deceive me or bring me under your spell. I am a believer, a pious and devout man of religion. I do not love or desire. Impossible, impossible.”

The Pillow *(confidently, with a blend of sarcasm and defiance):* “I may be a piece of cloth, but I am padded with your whispered words and your loud, passionate dreams. True, I am cloth, but I am also soaked with the tears you shed until they wet my stuffing. I am an eyewitness to what you confess about her in your sleep. I feel your heart pounding wildly when you imagine her. I hear your nocturnal whispers: ‘Yara…’ Do you not ask God to protect you from the temptation of women? Why, then, do you secretly ask her to tempt you?”

Hassan: “I do not love her! She is an unbeliever. She does not wear the hijab, mocks my religion, and attacks what I hold sacred.”

The Pillow: “No, a thousand times no. You are the one who is lying, deceiving, and evading, just as she does.”

Hassan replied with manufactured arrogance and weary defiance: “The devil is whispering to me. It is her devil.”

The Pillow: “No, my friend. It is your heart—the heart you chose to turn into stone, only to discover that it is glass, shattered by her name. Remember the day she resigned? You stood at the office door for five whole minutes,

staring at her empty desk. Then the fragrance she had left behind reached you, and you felt as though you were in a temporary paradise."

Hassan: "My heart is a traitor."

The Pillow: "I am a witness. You are a traitor to yourself."

The pillow seemed to quote Nizar Qabbani:

"Tell the one who pretends to be pious,
who performs devotion and chastity,
and fills the world with shouts against love—
tell him: come, let us share the great lie,
for you love women as I do."

Hassan, his voice broken, asked his heart, "Do you know her?"

His heart laughed at him. He could not understand why it behaved this way or why it would not answer. It simply kept laughing, as though mocking him.

The Pillow: "And what do you tell yourself at night, when you are alone with me and with her image, which never leaves your eyelids?"

For a moment the pillow fell silent, then Hassan whispered, "If they knew, they would stone me with words before they threw stones."

The Pillow: "Will you keep whipping yourself? Will you keep denying that you are human before you are a sheikh? Look into yourself as you look at the congregation from the pulpit. What do you see?"

After a long silence, Hassan replied: "I see conflict. A man who is harsh with himself to please his Lord, while his heart disobeys Him."

The pillow spoke again:

"Love is nothing but a confession
that one woman can bring down a kingdom of men
and turn history into a blank page."

Hassan sighed and pleaded, his breath burning: "If only she were a believer… if only she wore the hijab…"

The Pillow *(mockingly):* "Do you love her hijab, or do you love her? If she removed it, would she stop being Yara? Remember her eyes when she challenged you, as though she were reading your thoughts from an open book. Were those not the moments that made you love her? Her difference, not her similarity?"

He fell silent. The clock showed three in the morning.

Hassan *(barely audible):* "I adore her."

He said it at last, and a chain inside his chest broke.

The Pillow *(with proud certainty):* "At last, you have confessed."

Hassan: “But it will remain a secret. A secret between you and me, between me and the night, between me and God, who knows everything.”

The Pillow: “Do you think denial can hide it? Have you not read in your own books: ‘Whether you conceal your speech or declare it, He knows what lies within the hearts’? He knows. He knows that you persist in denial.”

Scene Four: Morning

The call to dawn prayer sounded. Hassan rose, performed ablution, and prayed. But today his prayer was different. As he prostrated, he whispered:

“God… I know this love is forbidden. But Your knowledge of me is greater than my denial. Forgive me—or punish me—but do not let my heart split in two.”

He put on his white robe and turban and looked into the mirror. He saw a man carrying a secret no one knew, a secret named Yara.

He went out to the mosque, where worshippers greeted him respectfully: “Peace be upon you, our sheikh.”

“And upon you be peace,” Hassan replied.

Yet he knew that, since the previous night, a part of him was no longer entirely their sheikh. Some part of him admitted, if only in secret, that a woman he considered an unbeliever had taught him a harsh lesson in love and passion—one he would never have learned throughout his life, perhaps not even by its end.

In his bedroom, a small patch on the white pillow, left by the tears he had shed that night, testified that even the hardest hearts could melt when confronted with their own truth. As he rested on the pillow, the witness to his heart, he kept asking it desperately whether he loved her. His heart laughed, and his chest tightened around the secret. He continued to plead and ask.

His heart answered with sincere longing: “You worship her instead of the God before whom you kneel. Why do you resist, deny, and conceal it?”

Still, he would stand in the pulpit and warn against looking at women.

And at night, he would remember a gaze that had blossomed in the eyes of a woman who did not cover her hair.

“I will remain here, on the edge of the chair,
waiting for a letter from you,
or a glance,
or an excuse—
anything that might serve as a beginning.”

End of reflection

OIL AND WATER

A conversation takes place inside a transparent glass.

In a tall crystal glass stand oil and water. The oil is above, golden and thick, shining in the light like a contemplative mind. The water rests below, clear and simple, moving calmly like a believing heart.

Oil *(in a soft voice, trying to rise):* "Why do you refuse to mix with me? Are we not together in this glass? Are we not partners in life?"

Water *(calmly and confidently):* "Indeed, we share the same vessel, but we do not mix. That is the first truth you must understand."

A Clash Between Reason and Myth

Water: "But I am the foundation of life. It is written, 'We made from water every living thing.'"

Oil *(mocking, confident, and defiant):* "That is your first logical fallacy: overgeneralization. Some organisms can live without liquid water and rely on moisture in their food. Science says that most living things depend on water, not all of them. You love exaggeration because you want to feel important."

Water *(rippling uneasily):* "But I offer comfort. When a person is thirsty, I am their refuge. When a believer performs ablution, I make them pure."

Oil *(proudly):* "And I offer light. When the lamps of science shine, darkness disappears. You, by contrast, prefer people to remain in the darkness of faith so they will not see the gaps and flaws in your stories."

Myths Under the Microscope

Water *(astonished):* "These are divine miracles, not mere stories. You belittle them and deliberately try to diminish their value. I carry the tales of prophets, the miracles of gods, and the promises of paradise!"

Oil: "Stories borrowed from the myths of Babylon and Sumer. Let me remind you what your beliefs are without their embellishments and patchwork explanations:

- The flood story appears in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* a thousand years before the Torah.
- The creation of Adam from clay resembles an ancient Egyptian myth.
- The idea of seven heavens echoes a Babylonian conception of cosmic layers.

"You have nothing original of your own. You are merely a distorted transmitter. You openly contradict science, so blatantly that even a blind person could almost see it. Your problem, dear water, is that you boast of proving something for which you have no evidence—not even evidence of a possibility. You speak of it with absolute certainty and threaten those who deny it, as though you saw it with your own eyes, without the slightest effort at research or learning.

"Could there be greater arrogance and stupidity? Your beliefs have become so brazen that you curse, insult, threaten, and intimidate anyone who refuses to believe or submit to them, without offering any attempt at analysis or logical thought. You forbid inquiry and forbid investigation. With insolent stupidity, you declare that whoever uses reason falls into heresy, threatening them with eternal Hell and suffering, while possessing not the smallest proof of the punishment you promise—or of the bliss and rewards you offer in exchange for their humiliation, servitude, submission, and abandonment of independent thought.

"Is that not shamelessness? You praise anyone who follows your sacred texts without thinking, as though they were livestock, animals, or donkeys wearing a bridle that must never kick or resist. How arrogant and tyrannical you are!"

Water *(angrily):* "But my book says, 'The sun runs toward its resting place.' That is a scientific miracle!"

Oil *(mocking, astonished):* "And that is your second fallacy: selective interpretation. You choose one verse and interpret it however you like, while ignoring another statement in the Qur'an: 'The earth We spread out'—language that suggests a flattened surface rather than a globe. Science tells us that the Sun is relatively stable while Earth revolves around it. You pick the cherry, as the saying goes: you take the sweet fruit and leave the rest. That is

another fallacy added to your long list of evasions, repairs, and contradictions."

The Battle of Reason

Water: "But many scholars bring you and me together. They are famous people, whom you know even if I need not name them. They are symbols of the very science and reason you praise, yet they are believers who support scientific claims with verses from sacred scriptures of all religions. They appear constantly on screens, channels, and social media, surrounded by admirers, followers, and flatterers."

Oil *(with disgust):* "That is the greatest disaster of all. When something spreads and everyone agrees with it, be certain that there may be a serious error—or even a grave danger—at its heart. That is herd mentality. When quantity overwhelms quality, you are in danger. Matters should be judged by quality, as I do, not by numbers, patchwork, and deception as you do.

"The names foolish people in your environment boast about are often tools for fraud, the ruler's right-hand men. It is the filthy partnership between religion and politics, the same old distraction game—indeed, the game of illusion and deceit. These hypocrites are not scientists; they are patchers. They are like someone trying to mix oil and water by force. They cite the Big Bang to confirm 'Be, and it is,' while ignoring that the theory itself says nothing about a creator; it describes a physical process. This is the straw-man fallacy: they construct an imaginary theory, then attack it."

Water: "But the theory itself says there must be a first cause! Perhaps it is energy, perhaps a force science will discover as it pursues the truth and investigates facts. Scientists may labor for hundreds of years to make sure their research is rigorous and honest, rather than relying on myths and stories as you do."

Water *(with certainty):* "That cause science has not yet discovered is God."

Oil *(mocking):* "The fallacy of the chain! 'Droppings prove the camel; footprints prove the traveler'—what a naïve and crooked way to reason. If I ask you, 'Who created God?' you say, 'God is eternal.' Then why could the universe not be eternal? Why do you need a mythical intermediary to explain what you do not understand?"

"And let me add something else you may deny, have forgotten, or deliberately ignore."

Water *(tense and worried):* "What are you getting at?"

Oil *(standing tall, with the pride of a crowned king):* "I am proud to say that I remove bacteria and dirt produced by living bodies, especially the human body we are discussing. Human skin produces bacteria, fungi, and sweat, leaving effects worse than bad odor alone. If they remain on the body instead of being properly cleaned, they can cause skin and environmental health

problems. Oily substances—especially oils—absorb and remove dirt from the skin and throughout the body. They work like magnets, collecting grime deeply and leaving behind the pleasant fragrance of genuine cleanliness, which science has demonstrated.

"You poor thing, however often people try to clean themselves with you or with other non-oily, non-greasy tools, you will not remove dirt as deeply as I do. You have no color and no smell, and you cannot cleanse grime with my thoroughness. Because you have no scent, unpleasant odors can remain on the body if people rely on you alone.

"The disaster is that naïve believers venerate you excessively, preferring you over everything else. Even if bacteria remain on the body and bad smells spread, they do not care: the ritual requires you, and nothing else matters. A foolish believer can stand before his god, performing rituals while the smell of dirt clings to him and bacteria burrow into his body like woodworm. As long as he has used water, he believes all is well.

"What if a believer abandoned you completely and used only me? I would leave him clean, free of clinging bacteria and dirt, pleasantly scented—and he could do without you altogether."

Water *(interrupting angrily):* "No! His prayers and rites would not be accepted without me. I am the symbol of purity. Without me, his worship is invalid. Even the finest oils in the world, no matter how expensive, cannot help him if he does not use me. I symbolize purity, life, and sanctification."

Oil *(sarcastically):* "And that is the calamity, the contradiction itself. How astonishing you believers are! For you, it is nothing more than blind veneration and rituals performed without awareness, science, or reason. If you seek cleanliness and care about purity, why reject my ability to remove dirt deeply from your bodies and insist on water, which merely leaves the dirt where it is? If purity is the goal, which is cleaner: a believer who performs his rites clean, fragrant, and free of bacteria and grime without water, or someone who soaks every part of the body in water and then stands like a fool to pray while covered with bacteria, dirt, and unpleasant smells—yet whose worship is supposedly accepted and correct? The odor does not matter, nor do bacteria and grime. Only you matter, water. They even refuse to perfume you. What stupidity!

"They are not seeking genuine cleanliness. They seek imaginary commands and rituals, which they perform by sanctifying you alone. They are merely foolish, humiliated slaves. It is the height of superficiality and contradiction, the logic of illogic: purity without cleanliness."

Rich and Poor

Water *(with emotion):* "I am accessible to everyone. The poor drink me, and the needy perform ablution with me. You, however, are available only to the wealthy and privileged."

Oil: "And here lies the point. You flourish where ignorance, poverty, and disease flourish. In the poorest villages, temples and mosques are crowded. In the most scientifically advanced, technologically developed, civilized, and wealthy countries, religious institutions decline and shrink. You are merely consolation for the poor in their poverty and for the ignorant in their ignorance—the illusion that the needy will receive what they desire and more, but not now, in another world. You are an easy-to-reach, deceptive mirage. You are the opium of the people, as Marx said: you numb them to their real demands by promising paradise."

Water: "I give them hope!"

Oil: "No. You steal their real hope. You tell the worker to be patient because paradise awaits, while ignoring the factory owner who exploits him. You tell the oppressed woman that her suffering is God's decree, ignoring the injustice of laws made by people like you."

The Problem of Many Gods

Water *(proudly):* "But I call for one God!"

Oil: "Which God? The jealous God of the Jews who commands the killing of children? The incarnate God of Christians who dies on the cross? The God of Muslims who promises seventy-two houris to the martyr? Every religion depicts a different god, and each claims to possess the truth. This is the 'god application form' game I mentioned, as though God fills out a different form for every religion.

"He is like an international con artist, skilled at changing disguises and colors so no one can uncover him. He hides completely, then demands that people submit, plead, kneel, bow, and worship him in countless ways that contradict one another. He threatens eternal woe and torment for those who refuse, punishments they have never seen and cannot even imagine. What tyranny! What narcissism and vileness! Then, after all this, he describes himself as self-sufficient and praiseworthy. Where is this self-sufficiency when he desperately needs people to grovel, submit, bow, kill, and be killed for him?

"To my mind, this is the height of poverty, need, and want. He is less mature than a spoiled child who needs to be pampered—or perhaps a psychologically wounded being who suffered deficiency, humiliation, rejection, and contempt, and now tries to compensate for that deprivation through humans. He claims that he created them only to satisfy his sick desires and narcissistic ego.

“And he did not stop there. Like a chameleon, he changed shape and color within the minds of those who invented him, appearing differently in every religion and ritual, contradicting each version with another. Each group runs after its own belief, convinced it has the correct version of this god, who surpasses even a flirtatious woman in his games of concealment. It is as though he enjoys their confusion, differences, and quarrels. How naïve the believers are!

“Then, according to their own claims, he creates a devil to be his enemy and evil by definition, against that creature’s will, merely so he can cast himself as good. He permits this devil to tempt people, roam the earth, and strut about as he pleases, then claims to be angry with the devil and those who follow him—as though it all happened against his will. Does he not claim to be all-powerful and all-knowing? What contradiction! What violation of logic and science—and what evil! Does this being deserve your reverence, respect, or bowed head? Astonishing!”

Water: “Faith gives the weary soul comfort and tranquility. Trusting in God means that He manages one’s affairs and grants energy, relief, and hope. Faith gives inner peace!”

Oil: “And it also brings external war! How many wars have been waged in your name? How much blood has been spilled under the slogan ‘God is greatest’? Science builds hospitals while faith blesses soldiers, holy war, humiliation, submission, and the abandonment of thought, inquiry, doubt, and questioning. You call for obedience and surrender. I call for questions, logical analysis, scientific research, hard work, and investigation. I doubt, therefore I exist. Doubt opens a gate to imagination and inquiry; behind it lie truths waiting to be uncovered. It is a gate that calls for research and science, the sharp edge that puts the dots over the letters. Without me, the weapon of progress and civilization, the universe cannot be set right, no matter how hard you try, or how hard your beliefs and gods try.”

The Inevitable End

Water *(in a despairing voice):* “But people need me.”

Oil: “To give them hope in their miserable lives, while death lurks inside them at every moment? Meaning does not come from fleeing into superstition. Human beings build meaning themselves, through their choices, creativity, and love for one another. Why do you think life needs heavenly promises in order to have value?”

Water: “Because death is a separation…”

Oil: “Death is final separation. There is no paradise or fire—only our atoms returning to the universe from which they came. That makes life very precious, because it is a single opportunity, not a trial run for paradise as you and your beliefs claim. Life’s value lies in succeeding, developing oneself,

learning to enjoy each moment, and respecting honor, ethics, and law. These principles are for the sake of ethics themselves, not false principles that make people wait for a reward in exchange for obedience and fear of punishment."

Final Scene: The Clear Separation

The oil remained on top and the water below. From a distance, a viewer might think the glass contained one liquid. But anyone who looked carefully could see the dividing line clearly: the golden color stood wholly apart from the clear water—or what seemed clear to the naked eye. It was the line between myth and truth, between illusion and reality.

Oil *(confidently, from above):* "This is our fate. We may occupy the same vessel, but we do not mix. Science refuses to become a foolish servant of faith, and truth refuses to submit to myth."

Water *(finally calming):* "So... we will remain separate forever?"

Oil: "Yes, because mixing is impossible. Yet a day may come when all the water evaporates and the oil remains pure—a day when people no longer need gods and are content with their own humanity."

Sunlight entered through the window and played across the oil's surface, forming tiny rainbows: pure physical beauty that needed no mythical explanation. The glass remained a witness: some truths do not mix, no matter how much people wish they would.

Conclusion: In the end, the discerning observer understands that oil is above and water below. Attempts to mix them are like trying to hold fire and ice in the same palm.

"Science does not need religion, but religion always needs science to justify its existence. Humanity is divided into two kinds: those who see the dividing line and accept it, and those who close their eyes and imagine that things which can never combine have somehow become one."

End of reflection

THE HONORABLE ONES

Scene: An Imaginary Day of Judgment

The sky was not golden, as believers had imagined, but grey, like a philosopher's mind. There was no throne and no river of wine—only an immense hall, where God sat on a simple chair, reading from a transparent tablet.

Believers from every religion stood in rows: Muslims in white robes, Christians bearing crosses, Jews carrying their books. Off to one side stood the atheists: scientists in laboratory coats, philosophers with tired eyes, and ordinary people whose faces were calm.

The Dialogue: The Shock

God *(his voice echoing like a sound inside a cave):* "I deliberately hid myself to test your faith, to prove that you believed in the unseen."

The Believers *(speaking in one confident voice):* "We trusted You and Your existence with hearts filled with Your divine light! We never needed any tangible, material evidence, or logical or scientific arguments. We found You within our believing souls, in our hearts, prayers, fasting, and worship. We felt Your mercy surrounding us in every circumstance. We called to You and pleaded with You. Your presence in our hearts was the greatest proof of Your existence. Faith alone was a blazing sun that overwhelmed everything beneath it with its brightness. We needed nothing more to see and hear You

as though You stood before our very eyes. You are God; all You need is a pure believing heart, filled with prayer, worship, bowing, and prostration."

God *(with disgust):* "No. You are liars and hypocrites. You did not choose me, nor were you convinced of my existence for the reasons you have just offered."

The believers gasped. "What? You always called for faith! How can You say this now?"

God: "I called for honesty and inquiry. I am not what you imagined; otherwise, I would not deserve to be God. I never wanted hearts that simply surrender and obey, you cowards. Not for one day—not even one hour—did you love me. I watched you all the time, deceiving me with honeyed words in your prayers and supplications, trying to fool me with the crocodile tears you shed constantly.

"You fell in love with humiliation. Your wretched souls found comfort in degradation. Fear was your only motive, the strongest force that drove you to invoke me and plead with me. Not one day did you perform a prayer or ritual in any of those accursed religions out of love for me or conviction in me. You did it out of fear and greed. You miserable, humiliated slaves feared the torment and threats of an eternal fire that would scorch your faces and crush your skin forever. You coveted houris, food you had never tasted, comfort and bliss without prayer or toil—an eternal paradise of eating and drinking, a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and happiness. You longed for rivers of honey, wine, and milk. The carrot lured you, and the stick drove you to run: you fled the imagined blows and chased the treat dangling before your eyes, like donkeys—or less than donkeys. The donkeys I created refuse to sink to your level. They do not worship a god they cannot see and know nothing about; they crave no paradise or houris, and fear no torment. In my eyes, they are purer and higher than you."

The believers' mouths hung open in astonishment, as though lightning had struck them.

"What a calamity! What are we hearing? Were You not the God who deliberately concealed Himself? Were You not the One who said that faith meant surrendering and obeying divine religion and sacred texts, without questions, investigation, or inquiry? Were You not the One who said that the heart was the seat of faith and thought, while the mind was only an instrument? Did You not glorify blind faith? Did You not threaten us with fire and eternal punishment if we did not believe in You, while insisting that we must not demand to see You? Did You not say that we could not bear Your appearance and that You had hidden Yourself to test our hearts and the strength of the faith rooted in them? Did Your books not promise us green gardens, fruit, and beautiful companions because we deserved them by never questioning You, since You are not to be questioned about what You do? Did You not say, 'Eat and drink in happiness for what you used to do'? Have You

changed Your principles after deceiving us for all the years we spent imagining that we were pleasing You? Now You call us cowards and greedy people. Did You not encourage us to become exactly that? Was it not Your choice and command?"

God *(interrupting, his face darkening):* "I never deceived you. You deceived yourselves. As for your foolish questions, I have answered them. I told you that I deliberately concealed myself so I could distinguish the genuine from the false, the coward from the brave, the person of courage, dignity, and pride from the contemptible, servile soul that moves only at the lash and is driven only by deferred desires and appetites promised for the great Day.

"Those are your own traits. You imagined that I knew every unseen thing, but I needed to see the results for myself. This was no trick; it was the real test, the one that exposes the imitation and reveals the original, the liar and the honest person. I needed to discover who would search, think, and weigh matters consciously; who would respect science and logic, and spend years searching for me—not because they wanted my paradise, food, or drink, nor because they feared their skin and body might burn forever or be eaten by worms in a lake of sulphur, but because they wanted to know me and communicate with me.

"I wanted to be approached, discussed, questioned, and loved—not my paradise or bliss. I hid to learn who truly wished to love me, rather than those who feared me and approached me only to avoid my sting, as though I were a poisonous scorpion or snake. You pleaded, trembled, and begged for forgiveness, hoping to secure bliss and escape my supposed anger and revenge. I hid to see who wanted the truth and genuine contact, rather than paradise, wine, food, and drink, or protection from punishment.

"Do you call this love, believers? Is this what you understood from my concealment through all these centuries and billions of years? How limited your understanding, how excessive your greed and cowardice! Answer honestly: did you ever search for me? Did any of you wonder why I was absent? Did any of you exhaust your mind and brain in even the smallest attempt to look for me, or to discover where the universe around you came from? Never. You never tried. You closed your minds and thoughts until rust covered them and they died. You buried them in the cemetery of faith, obedience, and submission, without effort or hardship.

"You were born into families who followed a religion, so you followed it without discussion. Then you convinced yourselves that you had thought it through and decided that the religion inherited from your parents must be correct. You argued and shouted at believers of other religions, who were no less lazy, foolish, or naïve than you, claiming that you alone were right and knew me as I truly was. Followers of each religion and sect fought one another—not out of a genuine desire to find me, but out of fear of the torment I supposedly threatened you with and greed for the bliss I

supposedly offered. I did not truly want these things from you. I wanted to expose you as you were, to discover what lay inside your souls and intentions. The truth poured out before me like a raging flood.

"Your tears came cascading the moment I threatened punishment for those who worshipped me without seeing me, and the moment I told you to worship me as though you could see me—even though you had never found me before you. Was fear of me your greatest motive? Was greed for promised bliss the force that stirred your ambitions?"

God *(deeply moved, his voice filled with sorrow):* "You never wanted me for myself, not for a single day. You never exerted yourselves to seek me. You feared me and coveted the riches of my bliss, like someone trying to inherit a relative's fortune: they flatter and beg, show him excessive care, and draw close in the hope that he will leave them as much of his property as possible. Sadly, in your eyes I was nothing but a terrifying, narcissistic, wrathful, vengeful being who thought only of himself and loved only those who grovelled and submitted to him, rewarding them to satisfy his childish vanity."

The Believers *(stammering in confusion):* "But You encouraged us to do this. You tempted us with bliss and taught us fear. We admit that we feared You, and we confess that we never tried to investigate Your existence. We inherited religion and belief in You from our families, our countries, and those around us. We feared changing what our fathers had followed, lest Your curse pursue us and Your anger descend upon us, depriving us of the pleasures You promised if we worshipped You as our parents had done.

"Even those among us who dared to change their inherited religion did so because they believed they had found the true faith. They still surrendered to You without proper questioning or inquiry. We heard of You in more than a thousand forms and faces. We heard about Your punishment, wrath, vengeance, and bliss in a thousand shapes in every religion, all contradicting one another. We admit that we never sought You for Your own sake. We sought You because You tempted us with rewards."

God *(angrily):* "And now you admit it openly. You never searched for me or made any effort. You spared your brains and thoughts and searched only for the pleasures and desires you hoped I would grant you. You sought yourselves and your own satisfaction. You sought protection from torment and indulgence in bliss. How much you love yourselves, cowards!

"I now declare openly to all of you, believers of every religion, sect, community, and god: yes, I tempted you, made promises to you, and frightened you—not so that you might surrender to greed and ignorance, beg, submit, and abase yourselves. Not so that you might seek to satisfy yourselves by dreaming of paradise, houris, and pleasure, or fear that your sensitive skin would be branded, burned, or charred eternally in a lake of

sulphur. How selfish, cowardly, and degraded you are! You love yourselves, contemptible slaves. Nothing moves you except the whip and the stick.

"You performed the foolish rituals of every religion, in every form and color, only because you loved yourselves, feared for yourselves, and postponed your desires until that promised day. You have now rushed to me not to meet or speak with me, but to receive prizes of comfort and indulgence. You beautified the ugliness and absurdity of life just to obtain those rewards—not for my sake. You arrived in terror lest I grow angry and punish you for your sins. Each of you remembers his good deeds, charity, and kindness to the poor, hoping I will be pleased and overlook his offenses. He smiles slyly, imagining the bliss he has always desired.

"Could a soul be more base, contemptible, or vile? You now confess everything, and I will answer confession with confession: I did all the things you have described, tempted you and threatened you, to see your responses and expose falsehood and deception for what they were."

God turned toward the atheists, looking at them with respect and appreciation, then addressed the believers.

"Look at them, you foolish slaves who love no one but yourselves and are moved only by fear. Ask your own consciences: why did they not covet what you coveted? Why did they not fear as you feared? Why did they seek me rather than my paradise? Why did they sacrifice themselves willingly, offering themselves as a perpetual offering to roaring fire—and even welcome it in the name of truth? What moved them, if neither fear nor greed? Why did they not inherit their parents' religions as you did? Why did they reject them and turn away from all religions? Why did my promises of pleasure not entice them? Why did they not fear my fire, Hell, or my worms? Why did they care only for truth, welcoming even the fire for its sake? Why are they ascetics in the face of reward and seekers of truth, while you are cowards, fearful and greedy?"

The Believers *(astonished, their words frozen):* "But they are unbelievers! They denied Your existence and challenged You. You yourself called them infidels and deniers of Your blessings. They rejected You. Will You praise them after they rejected You?"

God *(mocking, yet confident):* "They rejected humiliation and degradation. They rejected the seduction of houris, pleasures, rivers of milk and honey, gardens, and the kingdom of bliss. They rejected submission and abasement. You believers have no dignity or pride; you seek only yourselves and the satisfaction of your wretched egos. They are not as foolish as you. Do you know why? Because they did not believe without thinking. They searched for truth and reflected. They strained their minds not to beg for pleasure and bliss or to protect themselves from Hell, but to discover me for myself.

“They wanted real communication with me: dialogue and discussion for the good of the universe. They thought about the public good, the improvement of life, the spread of knowledge, and labored in scientific laboratories, developing medicine and treatments. They worked to improve life, technology, and science, educating researchers who advanced the world through their knowledge and civilization. They served humanity.

“When I deliberately concealed myself to see how they would respond, they remained steadfast. They did not covet pleasures or lusts their eyes had never seen and their ears had never heard, even though I tempted them with promises of delights beyond anything they could find in this life, no matter how far it advanced or how long it lasted. They kept searching. They spent their lives inventing, protecting people from diseases and epidemics. They did not weaken or give up; they did not desire what you fools desired. They devoted themselves to improving and protecting life, making discoveries and inventions, developing the world.

“When I saw how steadfast they remained, I tried to frighten them with Hell and fire, threatening them in the books I had led you to believe were true. Still they did not fear or weaken. They continued seeking me. When they did not find me, they turned to improving life, inventing things, and laboring through thought, analysis, and logic. They followed the honest scientific path built on evidence, not myths and fables, in order to develop and advance.

“Meanwhile, you stood like stagnant, stinking water, lazy, hesitant, and inactive, doing nothing to build, develop, study, or work. You claimed that life was fleeting and worth less than the wing of a mosquito. Then, when you began to crumble like an old building whose foundations had been eaten away by decay, you turned to them. You needed their inventions, medicines, and knowledge. You boasted of living in their countries, yet inwardly you wished them harm and shed their blood—or declared it lawful to shed—because they were infidels. You lived at their expense. They were the rescuers, while you contemptible people became mere consumers.

“While they searched, thought, questioned, reflected, and sought me earnestly and honestly—without fear or greed—you wept and supplicated, terrified for yourselves, coveting bliss and fearing punishment. You remained like stagnant water until you stank, idle and cowardly, moved only by fear and greed. While you trembled, they were searching, thinking, inventing. They never coveted paradise, food, or drink. They did not fear an eternal fire; they willingly offered themselves in the cause of truth and science, knowledge grounded in honest evidence, logic, and precision—not in myths and fables so absurd they blind the eye of the sun. Yet you followed those stories arrogantly and foolishly, patching them together and forcing them onto your religions in order to hide your embarrassment, conceal your religions’ flaws, and cover your weakness and cowardice.

“When you were cowards, they were brave. Fear and punishment could not defeat them in their pursuit of truth, science, and reason. While you chased the pleasures of an afterlife, greed and desire drove you, and fear tormented you. What a vast difference between you and these courageous, determined people who renounced pleasures and lusts to seek truth and science, benefiting humanity and the world!

“Fear shackled you, greed controlled you, and you lived among myths, ignorance, and superstition. You thought only of satisfying your appetites and desires by coveting bliss. The carrot tempted you and the stick frightened you. You feared that your bodies would burn, char, or be roasted forever, or be eaten by worms in a sulphur lake. So you begged, prayed, gave alms, and performed good deeds—not for my sake but as a business transaction of profit and loss. You never did good for goodness itself; you expected a wage that would bring you nearer to houris, pleasure, green gardens, and lustful delights. You wanted insurance against eternal fire and Hell, not a relationship with me.

“You never sought me as they did. You never loved me or wanted genuine contact as they did. You were greedy and afraid; they sought, learned, and advanced. They were not cowards chasing bliss, houris, food, and pleasures.”

Everyone fell silent.

God then pointed to an atheist astronomer.

“This woman spent forty years studying the stars, searching for the order of the universe and asking whether a mind lay behind its beauty. She found no evidence, so she refused to believe without proof. Yet every night she looked up at the sky and respected its mystery.”

The Atheist Astronomer *(calmly and confidently):* “I wanted to know You, not fear You.”

God pointed to an atheist philosopher.

“This man wrote: ‘If God existed, I would refuse to worship Him, because the evil in the world would make Him either powerless or evil.’ He did not ask for paradise; he demanded justice.”

The Philosopher *(with respect and dignity):* “I wanted a dialogue between equals, not flattery between a slave and a master.”

The Great Shock

God *(turning to the believers):* “And you… tell me: why did you worship me?”

A Religious Believer *(confidently):* “Because You deserve worship, and because of paradise—”

God: “Stop at ‘paradise.’ Would you have worshipped me if there were no paradise?”

Silence.

A Christian Nun: “Because You are love…”

God: “Would you have loved me if your fate had been the fire, with no promise of salvation through Jesus?”

She did not answer.

God approached a young atheist child who had died early.

“This child asked his mother, ‘Who created the universe?’ She answered, ‘God.’ He asked, ‘How do we know?’ She could not answer, so he decided to investigate for himself. He died before finding an answer, but he refused to believe without understanding.”

The Paradox: Who Is the True Slave?

“The believer worshipped me out of fear of Hell and greed for paradise. The relationship was a business deal: ‘I worship You, and You give me paradise.’ But the atheist rejected a narcissistic, psychologically diseased god who loved only himself and thought only of himself—a god who grew angry and took revenge, who claimed to be loving and saving while his actions and circumstances overflowed with contradiction.

“The atheist rejected a blind god who could neither see nor hear the universe’s crimes: murder, rape, and the deaths of innocents; people dying by mistake, through coercion, injustice, and wrongful accusation; children sick, hungry, and tormented through no fault of their own. The atheist rejected a foolish god who claimed mercy, saying that his mercy encompassed all things, while being as far from mercy as one could be—a god who tortured eternally.

“The atheist rejected a god who accepts goodness only when it is done for his sake, rather than for goodness itself. He rejected a concealed, arrogant god who looked down on those he claimed to have created. He rejected a god who created human beings merely to satisfy his own mood, to enjoy watching them kneel and bow in humiliation or perform whatever rituals he desired.

“The atheist rejected a god who delighted in humanity’s confusion, leaving people lost among countless versions of his true appearance, nature, and existence, across religions with a thousand sects and a thousand communities. This god sat back and watched them quarrel, each claiming to know his real face. The atheist rejected a con artist with a thousand faces and a thousand contradictory copies. He rejected the fraud of religious leaders, their alliance with rulers and sultans, their role as instruments of tyranny and corruption, and their use of religion to silence everyone beneath its accursed canopy.

“The atheist did good and acted ethically for goodness itself, knowing there was no reward waiting in another life. He upheld ethics and principles for honor and conscience, not for paradise, houris, heavenly kingdoms, or fear of grave torment and fire. He despised a god who postponed crimes, injustice, and corruption, closing his eyes and delaying judgment until an unknown day, as though shirking his own duties.

“He rejected a god who allowed life to overflow with every form of ruin, corruption, crime, treachery, and betrayal, even though that god falsely claimed to have honored human beings above plants and animals. If only humanity had matched animals in dignity and generosity! The atheist rejected a powerless god who stood with folded arms and allowed evil to flourish, claiming that an imaginary creature called Satan was his enemy—as though he were unable to destroy this devil, or perhaps was his accomplice, helping him tempt people and spread evil. The atheist was not frightened by threats and did not covet pleasures or bliss. He offered himself as a sacrifice to truth, searching along its winding, hidden paths with only the faint light of a candle to illuminate his way.

“The atheist studied, researched, invented, and developed. You believers needed his knowledge and inventions, and lived like rats dependent upon them—parasites living at the expense of other creatures. You were contemptible, cowardly, greedy, and base of soul. They, by contrast, were people of truth, science, effort, development, progress, and determination. Neither fear moved them nor greed tempted them. They were too noble to descend to your level, you humiliated, miserable slaves.

“I am no commodity in the marketplace of beliefs. It would be a disgrace for me, as God, to resemble the narcissistic, chameleon-like god you worshipped across religions and sects. If I were that kind of god, I would kill myself and end my life, for I would deserve no divinity. The traits you worshipped were not the traits of a god but of a cowardly, contemptible, narcissistic, evil, helpless, foolish, and stupid being.

“It would shame me to be the god with whom I deceived you, merely to discover who was honest and noble, who was searching for truth, and who was a coward seeking only self-protection from punishment and the satisfaction of his desires. That is all you wanted. These noble atheists, by contrast, sought me sincerely. They cared neither for enticement nor intimidation. They did not chase the carrot or fear the stick. They wanted me for myself and sought genuine contact with me, for the happiness, improvement, and advancement of the universe, and for the spread of knowledge—not terror, bloodshed, holy war, humiliation, servitude, bowing, kneeling, dependency, or laziness disguised as trust in God while supposedly making every effort.”

A Believer *(in a trembling voice):* “But we believed in the unseen! That is a virtue!”

God: “Believing in the unseen without evidence is not virtue; it is surrender. Courage means searching in the darkness even if you stumble, not pretending that you can see the light.”

The Turn: The Fire Is Not for These Noble Seekers

God *(confidently):* “Therefore, I have decided that the fire is the fate of cowardly, contemptible slaves. It is the destiny deserved by your base souls, which sold truth and bought myths and illusions out of fear, desire, and greed for everlasting bliss.”

A cry of terror swept through the hall.

A Believer *(in horror):* “Why? We believed in You!”

God *(contemptuously):* “Because you worshipped yourselves. You worshipped your own comfort. You wanted to be saved; you did not want me. You were merchants in the marketplace of religion. As for the atheists…”

He gestured toward the fire.

“The fire you spent your lives worshipping me to avoid—the fire before which you bowed, pleaded, and prostrated yourselves out of fear alone—they accepted it as the price of honor. They declared with dignity and pride: ‘If truth is fire, then let God burn us in it.’ This fire will now burn your illusions, foolish slaves. It will destroy fear and greed, not human bodies.”

Paradise: A Gift, Not a Reward

God smiled at the atheists.

“As for you, you never asked for paradise, so I give it to you—not as a reward, but as a gift born of love. You wanted me for myself, and so I offer you myself.”

The atheists looked at one another, unable to believe it.

“But… we do not believe in paradise,” said the astronomer.

God *(smiling):* “That is precisely what makes you worthy of it. Paradise is not a place for the obedient, but for noble seekers of truth. It is not for those who feared me, but for those who respected me even when they rejected me.”

Final Scene: A Smile in the Face of the Storm

The atheists entered “paradise,” which appeared as an infinite library, gardens devoted to scientific inquiry, and places for philosophical conversation. The believers entered “the fire,” which appeared as a vast mirror in which they saw themselves: fearful, greedy, and trading in faith.

At the end, God stood alone in an almost empty hall and smiled sadly.

“For thousands of years, they thought I wanted slaves. And I… wanted friends.”

The hall disappeared. Only the merciless truth and honor that does not die remained.

A Conclusion That Shakes Certainty

God had hidden not to test faith, but to test honor. The shock was that those who believed themselves closest to him were the farthest from his spirit, while those who imagined themselves his enemies were the only ones who understood him.

Perhaps the true God is not one who rewards obedience, but one who honors moral courage—even when that courage is directed against him.

The world is not divided into two camps, believers and atheists. It is divided between the contemptible liar and the honest, noble soul. The honest are those who seek truth, even if the fires of the world—or the fire of an evil, narcissistic god—should consume them.

End of reflection

LETTING GO

In an empty room, Lian sits in a white space containing nothing but a wooden chair, a window open to a grey sky, and a book by Cioran lying open to the line: “Want nothing, and you will have everything.”

Lian *(staring into the void):* “How can I want nothing? Desire is what keeps me breathing!”

Despair *(appearing as a shadow on the wall):* “No. Desire is what strangles your breath. Look: everything you want moves away; everything you pursue escapes.”

First Dialogue: A Lesson in Taoism

Indifference: “Do not struggle to succeed; let things happen. Your goals will not be achieved by chasing after them. Plant the seeds and let them ripen in their own time. Whether they grow or not, you continue along your path. The Taoists say, ‘Let life come to you.’ Do you know why? Because striving springs from the belief that you are incomplete. But you are already complete—here, now, in this emptiness.”

Lian touched the wooden chair. Simple. Solid. Real.

Lian *(astonished):* “But people say, ‘Ask, and you shall receive!’”

Indifference *(laughing softly):* “That is a sales pitch aimed at optimists. The truth is: stop asking, and what you need will appear. There is a difference.”

Memories—or Rather, Disappointments and Their Deceptive Promises

First: Love.

She had loved a man she believed to be her destiny. She pursued him, wrote to him, waited for him. He left.

Despair: "What happened when you finally surrendered?"

Lian: "I wrote my finest work. I discovered that the love I had been seeking was already inside me."

Second: Social Success.

She chased a position, tried to please people, and sought society's recognition. She lost everything.

Indifference: "And what did you find after all those successive disappointments and losses?"

Lian: "I found myself inside them. My losses turned out to be a great profit I had not noticed. Disappointment betrayed me only to build a tunnel within me, one through which I could walk into my own depths and search for myself. There I found the self I had lost. It was as though disappointment had cleansed me with its tears and enriched me through loss."

She smiled. "I found my freedom. I discovered that the only recognition that truly matters is the recognition I give myself."

Second Dialogue: Cioran the Teacher

Indifference: "Cioran said, 'Suffering is beautiful.' Do you understand why?"

Lian: "Because it is real?"

Indifference: "No. Because it removes masks. The optimist wears a mask of permanent happiness; the pessimist stands naked. And when you stand naked, you see yourself for the first time."

Lian: "But people say despair, indifference, and wanting nothing are weakness and sin!"

Indifference: "Despair is the true beginning. Despair of people gives you back to yourself. Despair of success gives you freedom. Despair of love gives you your own self."

The Transformation: From Pursuit to Revelation

Lian put the book down and took a breath.

Lian: "I feel that something is changing."

Indifference: "Because you are letting go. You are letting go of the expectation of happiness, the demand for love, the pursuit of recognition, and the need to understand everything."

Lian: "And what remains?"

Indifference: "You. Only you. And the world begins to come to you."

The Miracle: When the Void Reveals Itself

Suddenly, things began to appear: an idea for a novel floated into her mind; an inner peace flowed like a quiet river; and a clarity emerged through which she saw life for the first time.

Lian: "What is this?"

Indifference: "This is revelation. When you let go of everything, everything appears—not as you want it to be, but as it is."

Bukowski's Wisdom

Indifference: "Do you remember Bukowski? 'Don't try. Sometimes not trying is everything.'"

Lian: "He was a miserable drunk!"

Indifference: "And he was free. Free because he let go: he stopped trying to be 'happy,' 'successful,' and 'loved.' Then he became... Bukowski."

The Discovery: Maturity in Despair

Lian opened a notebook and began to write.

Lian: "I write now not because I want to become a writer, but because the words come. I do not chase them; they arrive."

The words flowed: profound, because they were not trying to prove anything; honest, because they were not afraid; free, because they waited for nothing.

Indifference: "Do you see? True creativity comes from letting go, not from demanding; from being filled by emptiness, not from running after fullness. You are living, breathing, writing—not because you want something, but because this is what you do, as fish breathe in water."

Final Scene: The Wholeness of Deficiency

Lian closed the notebook and looked out the window. The grey sky was beautiful. The sun set and the shadow disappeared, yet beautiful suffering and the creative energy of renunciation did not vanish. They had become her friend, her guide, her only truth.

Lian spoke with pride and confidence:

"I am well now. I have chosen myself, and when you choose yourself, everything changes. I am well because I no longer care about the words of

those around me. I no longer listen to their opinions or care about pleasing people at all. I no longer turn my back on my own happiness to make them happy. I give opportunities to myself rather than wasting them on others.

“I am well because, no matter how broken I become or how much I hurt, I keep moving forward with all my strength, resilience, and balance. I have come to believe that people are nothing but blank pages, sometimes carrying only a title. I no longer care about titles; I read the page if there is anything in it worth reading—if it is not empty.

“When I chose myself, I stopped building my hopes on anyone else. My strength lies in no longer waiting for someone to love me. I am my own crutch, the one I lean on. I no longer compare my life with anyone else’s, nor do I sail through the intentions of those around me. I refuse to keep playing a role I once assigned myself, remaining silent because people depend on me. It was as though I had to row alone against the current, while no one believed that the winds battered me as they battered them. What have I to fear from getting wet when I am already drowning?

“They assigned me that role, but now I have chosen myself. My dreams used to be stolen every morning. Was it deception? An addiction more dangerous than drugs? I was not living a life in harmony with my soul. Now I am. I have chosen what resonates with me, what speaks in my voice, what bears my imprint on everything, what sings and composes my own music. My decisions are no longer driven by fear or by chasing the unknown; they come from the most honest version of myself, from my identity and my distinctive mark.

“I no longer carry the burden of other people’s expectations. When I chose myself, I understood my worth. I do not need an evaluation from outside; I am the one who evaluates me. When I chose myself, my inner world began to harmonize with the outer world. I accepted myself, and life accepted me in all its forms and bent itself to serve me willingly, by choice. Choose yourself, and life will choose you.”

End of reflection

THE CAFÉ

On souls that refuse to be poured into molds

A Café in an Old Neighborhood

Noor sits in "The Lost Time Café." Each table represents a different human type.

Table One: The Look-Alikes

Men in identical suits. Women with canned smiles. Conversations that sound like repeated copies: "The weather… work… prices…"

Table Two: The Obedient

They laugh when they are "supposed" to laugh. They grieve when they are "expected" to grieve. Every new birthday, some part of them dies.

Table Three: The Conformists

They fear what is different and feel comfortable with what resembles them. They believe that peace means silence.

Noor's Discovery: I Am the Error in the Equation

Noor *(to herself):* "I feel like a marginal note in a tightly bound book."

She orders her coffee differently: no sugar, no cardamom, just one drop of honey.

The Waiter *(staring):* "No one orders it that way!"

Noor: “That is exactly why I do.”

A Dialogue with the Different Self

The Self: “Why do you feel like a stranger?”

Noor: “Because I hear melodies while everyone else hears words. I see distances while everyone else counts things. I feel the weight of souls while everyone else weighs bodies.”

Seeing Beneath the Conforming Surface

She begins to see what others do not.

The Handsome Man: He laughs, but his eyes are crying. He tells a joke, but his voice carries a scar. He pretends to be confident, but his hands tremble.

The Beautiful Woman: She is gracious, but her heart is dying. She boasts, but her soul is begging. She displays strength, but her bones are made of glass.

Noor: “The conformists are not alike. They differ in the same way—like stars that all shine, yet each one is dying in its own way.”

The Paradox: Unity Through Difference

Noor discovers that the people who are truly different are the conformists who believe themselves alike. Every human being is an entire universe, yet they reduce themselves to copies.

As for her, she is different in her solitude and united through her difference.

A Philosophical Dialogue with Coffee

The steam rising from the cup seems to form words.

The Coffee: “You are like the drop of honey in me. You do not belong, yet you complete me. You are unlike me, yet you bring harmony. You are the exception that proves the rule, and the rule reveals the beauty of the exception.”

Noor: “So being different is not a flaw?”

The Coffee: “It is the only virtue in a world that worships sameness. Resemblance is deferred death; difference is a difficult kind of life. And I prefer life, even when it is difficult.”

Climax: The Birth of the Different One

Everyone looks at Noor. They hear her silence, which is louder than their noise. They see her stillness, deeper than their movement. They sense her difference, more real than their sameness.

A man from the table of look-alikes approaches her.

The Man: "You… are different."

Noor *(smiling):* "Thank you."

The Man: "No, I mean… unsettling. You make me wonder: do I really want what I want, or do I want what they want me to want?"

Final Scene: Leaving in Different Peace

Noor leaves the café. Behind her she hears a whisper.

The Waiter *(to a new customer):* "Would you like coffee the way that girl ordered it?"

The Customer: "And how was that?"

The Waiter *(astonished):* "She made her difference seem like the most natural thing in the world."

Now Noor walks through the streets and sees each face as a story hidden beneath the mask of daily life. Every face carries a different story, trading betrayal and disguise as though they were morning greetings. Every act of conformity is a betrayal of one's own story.

Signed: Noor—outside the text since birth.

End of reflection

THE SACRIFICE

Scene

A terrible silence fills the space. She advances with steady, confident steps toward the enormous statue before her. It is a statue of a great open book, with a pen above it, as though writing words into the air.

She approaches before the assembled crowd. In a silence charged with awe and reverence, she kneels before the statue willingly, with a smile. She raises her hands toward it, contemplates it in quiet devotion, and bows her head. Everyone stands mute, bound by the solemnity of the scene. She kneels and touches the statue, saying:

“I am yours. I have given myself to you. I have given you all my dreams, disappointments, betrayals, and pain. I have offered every tragedy and every tear, shedding them willingly and putting them all to work in your service. Welcome pain; welcome suffering, and every disappointment that remains in my memory and has carved itself there—or that may yet come—if it serves you and enriches your capacity for creativity. Welcome.

“My chest receives every stab and disappointment with joy. Here it stands before you, proud of its wounds, pain, and scars, all for you alone. Every sorrow, every pain, every smile drowned in a sea of tears belongs to you. These are the forces that urge me to take up this pen and inscribe upon you every shade of art and creativity.”

She spoke as she examined and caressed the enormous pen mounted above the book statue.

She could hear the astonished crowd whispering: “Madwoman… she left her job just to write stories! What a fool! She will starve…”

But she was not really hearing them. She heard another voice.

Dialogue: The Voluntary Sacrifice

The Book Statue *(in a voice like the rustle of old pages):* “You have finally returned to me. I missed your words, the lines you write inside me. I missed you terribly. I used to envy that job of yours, which stood between us and kept me from the dewdrops your pen sheds—the drops that make my fruit blossom.”

She: “I was never away from you, not for a single moment. You were always in my thoughts and my blood, in every turn, every bow, every whisper, every letter and word I heard or read. My absence from you was for your sake. I was busy with you.”

The Statue *(astonished):* “Busy with me? How? Why? I see blood on your hands. This time it is not ink.”

She looked at her palms.

She: “This is the blood of my liberation, the price of my freedom. It is the blood of breaking the chains that bound me. A job stood between us, its cursed claws trying unsuccessfully to tear me away from you. This is also the blood of stability and liberation from a failed, degrading, cheap marriage that tried to keep me from you. It is the blood of every hardship and tragedy I endured, every drop shed by my feet as they walked over thorns until they brought me here.

“I have brought you my very entrails and laid them on your altar. Nothing and no one will ever separate me from you, for no reason whatsoever. All this time I was thinking about how, when, and where I could crush the cursed chains that stood between us. I wondered how to save every drop of blood I shed as tears from the depths of my body, drop by drop, so I could lay them in your hands and beneath your feet. I planned how to put them all to work for you, how to welcome them properly because they would willingly submit themselves to your service. I planned how to express my joy and pride in them, since they would bloom into fruit and sweet springs flowing through your garden.”

The Memory: The Slaughter of the Self

She quickly recalled moments she had engraved in her memory, turning them into a unique necklace of creative pearls to offer as shining lines in the enormous book.

The Hateful Chain:

The wretched creature who wanted to bind her freedom under the repulsive title they call "husband" had said, "Writing will not feed you."

But she had answered, "It feeds my soul."

One night, he burned one of her manuscripts. She watched the flames consume her words and felt as though her own entrails were being pulled from her body. In the morning she packed her bag. After a bitter struggle and enormous effort, she won her freedom through a final divorce, which she wore proudly like a medal of honor set with the crown of liberty.

The Job:

At the office, her colleagues whispered, "Look at her… she talks to imaginary characters!" One woman added, "My husband says to beware of her. Divorced women envy married women!"

She merely smiled. She could hear the small words being killed by petty jealousy.

Gold Gone:

She sold the last piece of jewelry she owned. The jeweler looked at her in surprise. "Why give it up? You said this was the last thing you owned. Is it for something urgent—a dangerous operation or an incurable disease?"

"To buy my freedom," she replied.

Losing freedom would have been more terrible than any disease in the world. She sold her last ornament and bought ink, paper, and months of time. The jeweler stared, stunned, as questions and astonishment roared like a flood in his eyes.

A Deeper Question: Why Do You Sacrifice?

The Statue: "Why are you doing this? Humans ask for security, money, and love. You may lose them all. Are you willing to lose everything for me?"

She: "If it pleases you and helps your brilliance and creativity, I welcome the loss—and offer it as a gift."

The Statue *(tenderly):* "You offer me your wounds and pain as gifts you have made for me? You spill your blood and bring your entrails, placing them willingly, lovingly, and proudly at my feet and in my hands?"

She took a small notebook she had kept hidden among the folds of her ribs. With dignity and pride, she placed it in the hands of the great book statue, kneeling before it.

"This is a notebook filled with words stained by my tears."

Salaf: "This page… I wrote it on the night I won my freedom, the night of the joy I had worked so hard to reach. I remembered everything I had endured

under that accursed, detestable chain that tormented my sleep and bruised my wrists. A chain they sanctify and revere, though it is far from sacred. They call it marriage, but to me it was a funeral procession carrying my corpse. I suffocated in the grave where I had been imprisoned, holding my breath and silencing everything within me as I searched for a way out. I finally dug through it with a needle and emerged on the day of my divorce, breathing in the pure air of freedom.

"Here is another page. I wrote these letters with my blood, tears, and smile on the day I was devoted to my work. I had never practiced the cheating and deceit others took for granted. Sincerity was my nature. Yet I was surprised by stabs of betrayal I had never expected. I hated the job because it did not represent me, but I remained sincere. I kept the wounds inside my chest and locked them away like a precious jewelry box. Then I placed the key in your hands. You opened the box, and those wounds became drops of ink, flowing from a pen that bloomed into lines across your sacred body, pure and untouched by flaw or defect, my beloved companion on the road, companion of words and of the journey.

"Without you, my features lose their shape, my meaning, my form, my heart, my thought, my awareness, and my self. Without you, I am not even present to myself. I do not know who I am or what I might be.

"Here is another page," she said proudly. "I wrote it when I discovered that I belonged to a people who must rise up and rebel—a people who hate patriarchy. I wrote it when I realized I was a feminist, or had always been one without knowing it. I wrote these pages when I saw masculinity, betrayal, and selfishness slipping like poison into honey, hidden between glittering words, false promises, deceit, disregard, humiliation, and meanness from every male being I had foolishly believed would be my refuge.

"I thought, naïvely and mistakenly, that I would find shelter in one of them. Instead, I crossed the gate of destruction without noticing. I was like someone fleeing the burning sands only to fall into a blazing fire. The fire burned away false feelings and turned them into scattered ash, exposing their fragility, dishonesty, and weakness, revealing them as a malignant disease with no hope of cure. I trampled that ash beneath my feet and ran, breathless, to you, my only love, begging you to forgive my negligence and my distance. I pleaded for golden lines with which to write this page of my life and lay it before you, so that it might bleed and cleanse me beneath your feet."

The Statue: "And you want me to remain the knife that tears your entrails each time the moment for writing arrives, so that you bleed lines and lines, decades of your life burning upon my pages. But are you not preserving your pain this way?"

She *(joy mingled with bitterness):* "Hurrah! This fills my heart. The pain that flowed from me has always been your fuel. Every tear that falls on paper

becomes a word; every dagger in my heart becomes a chapter in your immortal pages. My happiness lies in your flourishing. I turn my pain into a bridge over which you may pass calmly and securely. I came into this world for your sake, to nourish you and supply the fuel that makes you shine with the light of knowledge. You are the message I send to the world. Go on, travel across my body and sorrow; I will turn them into a bridge so your message can reach everyone. You are the faithful postman. Walk across my body: every pain, sadness, anger, moment of joy, and tear will become your safe bridge to the world."

The Statue: "My precious one, you nourish me at the cost of your own wounds."

The Tapestry: From Blood to Ink

She: "I am no more than a priestess or a nun in your sanctuary. I am a fabric willingly woven from blood into ink, flowing across the pages of your eternity. I receive the blessing of words. Let the fools around me say whatever they like. I neither see nor hear anything but your call, you who gave me a real life within your folds and granted me immortal breath in the breeze that moves through your lines, sentences, and words."

Conclusion: A Literary Prayer

A priestess in a temple without walls.
A sacrifice dancing upon her own altar.

She stood before the enormous book statue and bowed in submission and devotion.

"You are food that feeds upon ever-greater hunger. You are thirst that only more thirst can quench. The true sacrifice is not an offering to imaginary gods. It is the sacrifice made by those who walk over their pain and sorrow and build from them a bridge of golden letters and words, whose light reaches the whole universe in a letter perfumed with your fragrance. I sacrifice myself because the blood of sacrifice flows like perfume beneath your feet."

End of reflection

DOUBLES

In a corner of the city, where lights danced beneath the night sky, I saw those specters—or perhaps only shapes, half-creatures, fragments of beings, hints of something that might exist—circling around me. They were things no explanation could explain and no expression could fully describe. I felt like a starving person who catches the scent of food: it enters the nostrils, seeps into the body and the folds of feeling, and makes the hungry one feel full, almost stuffed, though all they have taken in is the smell. The smell of food without the food itself. I felt like a fish searching for a river that had dried up long ago.

Then their shadows appeared before my eyes, ghosts wearing white veils—or perhaps liquid mercury: visible, glittering with promises from afar, yet impossible to grasp. The instant you approach and reach out to touch them, they flee.

One shadow appeared. I rose at once and moved toward it, stretching out my hand. From a distance it waved, as though calling, “Here I am. Come closer. Come to me. I am your dream, your goal.” I was naïve enough to believe it would save me. I rushed toward it, eager to trust its promises, only for it to stab me treacherously in the back. Blood poured from the wound. Then I discovered that it had been a mirage, a counterfeit dream promising love and claiming to be the other half that would complete me. From far away it smiled a yellow smile that I mistook for paradise. When it finally revealed its face, I found hell itself: a mask dropped, poisonous fangs exposed. It had

wanted only to devour me for a while, then throw me away like scraps of spoiled food. It was not my other half at all, but an empty half, devoid of everything except the desire to torment me.

Another shadow drew near. I could see it clearly, extending a hand dressed in the garments of friendship and loyalty. I smiled: friendship, after all, is dearer, more precious, and more dignified than love. I hurried toward the specter, believing it real, only to find that friendship had been enmity in disguise. Betrayal, lies, one face before me and another behind my back; jealousy and hatred veiled in the costume of friendship. It vanished and evaporated like water turning into vapor, and everything returned to how it had been, as though nothing had happened. I was left without friends. I told myself: beware an enemy once, but a friend a thousand times—for one day fortune may turn, and the friend may know best how to hurt you.

I consoled myself and tended my wounds. The shocks accumulated; I hid the bruises that had risen across my soul and settled inside me.

After a while—hours, days, perhaps weeks—another shadow appeared, another new specter. This time I did not take it for a specter. I saw it as certainty, as an enduring and eternal truth. It stood before me, smiling, carrying a dazzling gift. I reached out and opened it. Inside were happiness and passion, shining and calling to me in voices I could hear unmistakably. Both told me I was happy—so very happy. I leaped, danced, and rejoiced. I felt them coursing through my blood and racing along my veins, whispering with perfect confidence that I belonged among the fortunate.

Then, without warning, everything disappeared. It evaporated and went with the wind. What I had felt became a pile of wreckage: burned, brittle, crumbling before me in submission and humiliation, drenched by a flood of tears. I looked around, but the being that had stood so vividly before me was gone. I called it, screamed at the top of my voice, imagining it might have gone somewhere nearby. Surely it would return. I waited, and waited for a long time. It never came. Sometimes it waved from far away, then withdrew again. I discovered that it was not what I had thought it was: only a suggestion, a passing impression, like air freshener or perfume that fades after a little while, leaving nothing—absolutely nothing. It was never the thing itself, only the illusion of its presence: an empty half, waiting for something to complete or fill it.

I decided to follow reason and thought. I said no to my naïve, untutored heart, which had never learned life or tested its claims. It would never mature, I thought; it was foolish and reckless, in love with madness, forever wandering the roads with its feelings and emotions. What an idiot! I had to leave that senseless fool behind. I marched forward with strength, determination, defiance, and stubborn resolve, certain that I was approaching sound judgment and full awareness—that reason must surely be superior to such a foolish heart.

I came closer, studied reason, and felt its features with my own hands. It too was a shadow, like all the others; no more than one specter among a whole procession of them. It reached toward me with a hand of iron, closed its shackles around me, cut into my wrists, and stopped my breath. A foul, heavy stone pressed down upon me and imprisoned my free spirit inside. I fled, realizing that it too was a mirage, a delusion—nothing more than a grave prepared, furnished, and equipped so that I could be buried alive until biological death finally claimed me.

From a distance I studied them all. They stood in ranks beside one another: pale shadows, ghosts wearing white veils stained with the blood of deceit, evil, betrayal, cruelty, and ruin. Every one of them had crossed my life, waved from afar, and tempted me with the promise of being my only hope. Each had turned out to be a fist made of blood, fire, and iron.

They stood before me in a formation like a wall, each supporting the next, dancing under the moon as though inviting me toward still more misery. I looked at them for a long time with contempt and revulsion. I understood that I could not learn new lessons on this road without paying the price in advance: everything has a price. Every new idea betrayed an old one; every different road required sacrificing another, familiar road that had been false.

It was painful to discover that I had always dealt with incomplete halves and intangible shadows: half-lovers, half-spouses, half-friends, half-relatives, half-siblings, half-children. Nothing in my life had been real or lasting. I had thought those empty halves and ghosts had forgotten me, when in truth they had never remembered me well enough to forget me in the first place.

Strangely, my philosophy of life had grown sad while my face remained cheerful. I love mornings, yet never miss the long nights. My heart boils while my actions remain cold. To become worthy of my suffering, I will withdraw as far as I can so that I may grow stronger. I will be different, even if I remain alone forever—why not? Solitude is the fate of great souls. I will follow my own road, even if I make mistakes; that is better than marching with the herd. I was burning, while someone arrived to complain about the smell of ashes. I will not heal in the place that made me sick; I must leave it at once. I will drink my sorrow and become drunk on it. I will find something worth living for, something worthy of all this. I approached life with my heart, and the smallest details wounded me. We are born from ecstasy and end in death through pain.

End of reflection

HYMN OF EXTINCTION

Life is only a small stage where the same scenes are repeated until they lose all meaning. Absurdity is the sole truth: human beings chase illusions of success and immortality while everything, in the end, crumbles into ash. Triviality is not a flaw but a condition of existence; honesty lies in facing the absurd without masks.

In desolate night streets, where lights shatter across wet pavements, an inner voice emerges: “Everything passes away, and every attempt to hold on is a trick.” Charles Bukowski wrote about people collapsing beneath the weight of their days: drunks and defeated souls, people who know the game is lost yet continue to play. For him, life is no heroic epic, but a sequence of desperate attempts to survive boredom and emptiness.

“Don’t try,” Bukowski had asked to be written on his gravestone. He did not pant after success, seek fame, or raise a banner of hope. Instead, he exposed how fragile human beings are before the absurdity of existence. In truth, we live in a world that sells us cheap illusions—love, money, celebrity—while the only certainty is that we are slowly consumed, dissolving into a merciless silence.

And yet Bukowski believed that writing, art, and even a moment of honesty with oneself could offer a small resistance to the absurd.

Life is little more than a cheap theatre, repeating its scenes until the actors no longer wish to perform. Each morning we wake to find ourselves in the

same roles: we run, work, laugh, and then collapse in silence. In Bukowski's eyes, existence is not an epic but a string of futile efforts to flee the void. The void remains, smiling mockingly as if to say, "Nothing you do means anything."

Success, love, fame—all are illusions sold in life's marketplace. The only certainty is that we are slowly used up, like a cigarette burning in the hand of a desperate addict. Still, something small remains: a hidden resistance, an honest moment with oneself, a poem written, a line spoken, or a mocking laugh thrown into the face of the absurd.

In a narrow room whose walls were blackened by cigarette smoke, Charles Bukowski sat in a battered wooden chair, pouring liquor into a glass that was half full. Across from him stood his philosophy, personified as a woman and heroine of the dialogue. Before an open window, she watched the night swallow the city.

Philosophy: "Everything seems absurd, Charles. People chase religious illusions, worship meaningless myths, and imagine that death is the beginning of another life. But I see death as it is: extinction, eternal silence, nothingness beyond it."

Bukowski: "Yes. Nothingness is the one truth we cannot deny. All those prayers and rituals are desperate attempts to decorate the void. I have written about it often: the filth of life, the streets that swallow you, the women and men who collapse beneath the weight of their days. Absurdity is not an idea; it is daily reality."

Philosophy: "But don't you think absurdity itself grants us freedom? Once we recognize that nothing awaits us after death, we are free from every fear and false promise. Albert Camus said that confronting the absurd is the beginning of revolt. I rebel through my writing; I refuse to remain a prisoner of illusions."

Bukowski: "Revolt? Perhaps. But I see it more simply. Life is harsh and full of disappointments, and writing is merely an attempt to stay alive amid the ruins. I seek neither meaning nor salvation. I write because I cannot remain silent. I write because words are the only way I can breathe."

Philosophy: "And I write to proclaim the death of the gods, to say that a woman is not a man's shadow or a servant to sacred texts. I write to prove that I exist, even if my existence is brief, even if it ends in extinction."

Bukowski: "Extinction does not frighten me. I have seen death in the faces of drunks, in the bodies of the homeless, in the eyes of women who have lost everything. Death is a natural ending. The absurdity lies in trying to conceal it behind stories of Heaven and Hell. But you write to expose that absurdity, and that is good. Perhaps this is the only meaning available to us: to cry out at the void before it swallows us."

Philosophy: “Your words are a cry in the face of emptiness. Yes—that is what I want. To leave a trace, even if it is only words on paper; words declaring that we knew the truth and faced it without fear. To live without illusions, without waiting, without false hope.”

“To absurdity, then—and to extinction, which makes us write as though every word were the last,” Bukowski said, raising his glass.

End of reflection

PRECISE CONTROL

In a quiet room, a man in his nineties sat before a large mirror, holding a cup of tea in his trembling hands. He tried to sip slowly. Each breath came with difficulty, and every time he lifted the cup to his lips it seemed as heavy as a stone in his exhausted hand, worn down by time and long nights.

The old man: “Where are you, strength I once knew? Where are the muscles that carried the rocks of life?”

The failing body (in a faint voice, like a whisper of wind): “I carried you for a long time. Every step you took, every breath you drew, every tear you shed, every laugh that rose from your throat—I gave you all I had.”

The old man gazed at his reflection as though a great hammer had suddenly struck his head and shattered his chest.

The old man: “But they told me you were exquisitely designed, a miracle of precision, that an immense power had mastered your making. All my life I trusted that you were extraordinary, filled with wonders, intricate details, and complex cells arranged in a perfectly engineered biological system. Didn’t I say so at every turn? Yet for years now you have betrayed me, slowly pulling the ground from beneath my feet. What is wrong with you, body? Are you lying to me, or challenging me? Are you denying everything I used to say and remind people of? Now you have come to disappoint me. I never knew you to be like this.”

His voice carried a hidden pain. “Now my bones ache, my eyes grow weak, and my heart beats more slowly. Is this what perfection looks like? I used to believe that every weakness in you was a test, and every wrinkle in my skin a record of wisdom. But now I wonder…”

The body answered bitterly, almost mockingly.

The body: “I never lied to you. You are the one who deceived yourself. Aren’t you the venerable scholar who speaks in the name of science and tells believers that their bodies are a divine gift, a perfectly made masterpiece? Weren’t you the one who tied precision of design to scientific proof and divine power? You lectured believers, praising the miraculous construction of my body, glorifying and marveling at the omnipotence and extraordinary wonders I supposedly embody. They grew more devout and applauded you. I never deceived you; I never asked you to say any of those things about me. You wanted them to believe, so you planted in their minds the idea of a mythical being somewhere beyond, a magician who could say ‘Be’ and bring forth a body with intricate folds and invisible complexities.

“For years I tried to show you the truth. I rang the alarm and lit a lamp for you, but you closed your ears. As you grew older, I tried again and again to tell you what you had led believers—and yourself—to imagine: that I was supernatural, made by the Best of Makers. How naïve! Are there other makers with whom we might compare this one and hold a contest to choose the best?”

The old man coughed violently, nearly losing his breath, then exhaled in pain.

The old man: “So now you punish me for my sin? Have you brought me old age, frailty, sickness, and exhaustion to take revenge because I ignored you and rejected the warnings you sent as the years passed? Was my youth with you only a beautiful illusion, a story we told ourselves so we could endure?”

He continued, shaken: “I am beginning to feel that I lived through a great deception, and you were its central character. You once seemed so strong and solid: running, leaping, shouting with a voice that filled the air. I thought you were stronger than this. I never imagined that growing old would make you turn your back on me. Why have you let me down when I praised and glorified your precise, perfect construction? Why lay the consequences of your weakness on my shoulders?”

The body: “I told you repeatedly: you were always deceiving yourself. I did not turn away from you overnight, and I did not betray you. I tried to be honest and logical. I warned you with illnesses, coughs, and weakness, but you would not listen. You listened only to your myths. Your sole concern was making those naïve believers trust you as a man of science, persuading them that science and faith were inseparable lovers. In truth, they are far apart, each following a different road. Yet you mixed sweetness with bitterness,

white with black, myth with scientific inquiry, experiment, and proof. You crushed their minds and ideas together in your colorful laboratory, then forced me into a frame painted with legends and heavenly miracles. I was compelled to remain silent, though I tried repeatedly to speak and stop your lies. You took part in a vast deception, a conspiracy against the minds of ordinary people who trusted you. Now some of them face sickness and death beneath the very body they were told was miraculous, unmatched in its creation. You must pay for your lies and drink from the same deceptive cup."

The old man looked bewildered. "I felt your warnings, especially as I grew older. I wondered why weakness crept over me even though I cared for you, watched what I ate and drank, and tried to keep you safe. Sometimes I thought you were challenging me or even hated me, as if you wished to rebel. I sought heavenly protection to overpower your rebellion. I prayed that my strength would be preserved, and begged that time would take nothing from me, but time took everything. The more frail and sick I became, the more stubbornly you seemed to resist."

The body: "Why imagine that a power exists to prevent the laws of the universe? I am part of nature's sequence. I was never supernatural or perfectly engineered, whatever you proclaimed so confidently. I am no more than an entity like a flowing river: I begin as a small spring, move forcefully toward the sea, then grow calmer, widen, spread out, and finally meet the ocean, losing my identity as I dissolve into it. Why persuade yourself that someone hears your words and prayers? If your prayers worked, if the all-powerful being you imagined truly had that power, why are you now so frail? Look at your sagging skin, sunken eyes, heavy lids, and thick glasses. Your eyes barely make out what is in front of them. Look at your bent back, which once straightened through exercise but could not remain strong forever. Look at your knees, shoulders, bones, and slackening muscles, all of which you praised as evidence of exact design.

"Consider your eyes: over the years, how many accidents have you had because your peripheral vision is almost gone? I tried to remind you that these two balls are only imperfect organs, containing a dark area that cannot see and must reconstruct an image from what little reaches it. Look at the weakness that has overtaken every part you once praised. Even the organs of urination and defecation occupy the same place as the organs you associate with desire and pleasure. Where is the artistry in that? Is it beautiful to put rubbish where flowers grow, or to plant fragrant flowers inside a stinking bin containing a rotting carcass? Where are wisdom and omnipotence in this arrangement? I struggled not to laugh through my tears as you cared for me. I watched you protect me like someone trying to preserve a piece of ice under the lashes of a burning sun. What a contradiction. You kept deceiving yourself, you foolish impostor."

The old man: “Then there is no maker who fashioned me with such precision? No hand that shaped my details? Have I been trying to carve upon water?”

The body: “I do not know everything. I know only that I was born from a meeting and that I decline toward death. What lies between birth and death is your story: the mind you carried, the heart that beat within me, the spirit you believed lived in my bones. I did not come from an omnipotent maker in the way you imagined. If I were as perfect as you thought, I would not have reached this state of sickness, decay, and weakness; your hands would not tremble, your back would not bend, and your feet would not drag with such effort.

“My strength has failed because, from the beginning, I was the natural product of evolution from a common ancestor shared by humans and other animals. Have you never noticed our similarities? Even the curve at the base of your spine, where a tail once was, is a remnant of our evolutionary past. Nature shaped the body with limited endurance and the ability to carry out biological processes for a finite period. It did what it could; it could do no more, because nature is not omnipotent and never claimed to be.”

The old man tried to rise, coughing furiously. “Are you saying I was a monkey, that I once had a tail and stooped forward? No! I will not believe you. I have been human from the beginning, honored and set apart from animals.”

The body: “Enough of this empty arrogance. You humans imagine yourselves above other creatures, while your own legends have persuaded you that everything in nature was made for you. The reality is different. Plants bear more fruit than they need for their own survival, and you came searching for food because hunger drove you. You ate what was available and slaughtered animals, imagining it had all been provided exclusively for you. You are only one link in nature’s cycle, just as other creatures are links in it. You, too, will decay and return to nature—perhaps as a tree, a palm, fruit, or water. And I wish you had lived with the dignity of an animal. Tell me plainly: who kills, steals, covets, bears grudges, and seeks revenge? Who lies and destroys the earth—you or the animal? Who is nothing without a document proving identity—you, or the animal or plant? Even as you struggle with death, you cling to the same foolish human arrogance built on illusions. An animal does not live by myths of creation or imaginary prayers. It is too dignified to descend to your level.”

The old man slowly rose, leaning on his cane, defeat trailing from his lips.

The old man: “Then there is no God, no perfect design, no higher wisdom?”

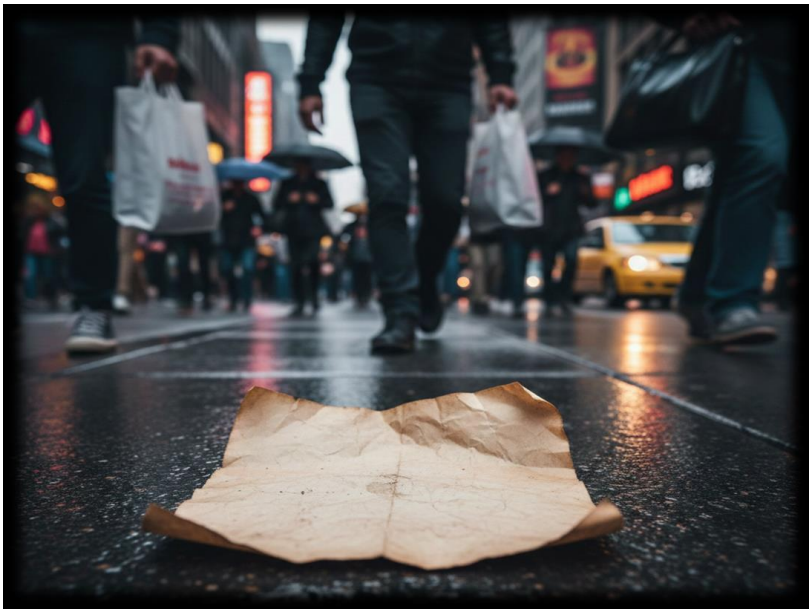
The body: “Perhaps the wisdom is the law itself: birth, growth, weakness, and death. Perhaps perfection lies in this natural sequence, in a journey that needs no external creator because it gives rise to itself.”

The old man offered a sad smile. “Strange—you give me a new philosophy even as my faith collapses.”

The failing body: “Because I am you, and you are me. We shall keep going together, right to the end.”

“Who am I? What am I?” The old man left the room, his steps slow but steadier, carrying with him a question larger than any answer.

End of reflection



A PAGE IN THE CROWD

A sheet of paper fluttered free, ink scattering across it, among the countless pages piled on a desk so crowded with documents that it seemed swollen and motionless. The page shook itself, as though brushing ink from its wings, and droplets and letters wobbled down in every direction.

One of the other sheets cried out, “Will you stop fidgeting, you troublesome page? Why are you always restless and complaining?”

The wandering page: “I am exhausted, worn thin by the endless words written across what was once my clean, white surface. The cursed pen in that wretched clerk’s hand—and in the hands of that foolish female clerk—has hurt me. They pass me from one hand to another as though I were a ball tossed between idiots. Their shouting has worn me down, and their repetitive, tedious words have deafened me. Oh, how those stamps have battered my body! I was once brilliantly white; now their stamps have blackened me, and their bureaucratic language and absurd procedures have cursed me. I long to be a pure, blank page again, free of stamps, laws, and regulations.”

The other pages answered in one voice: “This is not your fate alone. It is ours too. Human beings use us as tools and write whatever they please upon us. We accepted our fate and submitted to what is. Why can’t you? We always see you complaining and announcing your wish to leave us.”

The page replied with despair mixed with sorrow, boredom, and bitterness. “Yes, I must leave. Stay if you wish, but I cannot remain. Human misery, their disasters, and their routines have worn me out. I hate the voices of those foolish employees. This civil registry truly is full of ‘records’ and restrictions, as the ugly names they give us suggest—names suitable only for foolish people like them: a marriage record, a birth record, a divorce record, a death record. Oh, if only they would all die at once and free me from the restrictions with which they have shackled me! What have their constraints to do with me? I miss my purity, my whiteness, before they imprisoned me with you in this overstuffed file, behind bars that have long choked my breath and broken my ribs in this eternal, cursed prison.”

The other pages replied: “We suffer as you do. We endure the heavy fingers of clerks pressing their routine words and rigid laws into us. Their regulations delay people rather than help them, bind them, and stop their lives in their tracks for the sake of bureaucratic procedure. We suffer, witness, and hurt just as you do. The difference is that we have accepted our fate. We know we were made for this heavy task and cannot escape it. There is no use crying over spilled milk: we cannot change the system or the nature of these clerks. We cannot change the routine that binds them and has cut into their own wrists.

“Our difference is that we do not make the desperate attempts you make every day to slip away from our pile. Each time, a clerk’s hand catches you and returns you to your eternal prison. You quiet down, soften, and fall silent, only to try again, again and again, without the slightest benefit. You waste your time chasing a mirage. These boredom-filled routines and chains are the fate assigned to us, so that people may write across our surfaces. Where would you go? What if a few drops of water or ink fell on you as you tried to escape? You would end up in the trash, a lifeless, crumbling corpse. We will not risk our lives because of your recklessness. Even if we left, where would we go? To other people who would write their nonsense upon us in another registry office or government department, another place full of routine and its foul smell seeping from files, archives, and desks. Do you imagine you will reach a museum, a nightclub, or a celebration where someone will place you in a golden frame and sing and dance to make you happy? Wake up. You are nothing but a sheet of paper.”

The page, stubbornly: “No! You are wrong. You are resigned. I can escape these people, these wretched clerks, killed by office routine until they have become distorted creatures who move according to regulations and know neither mercy nor compassion. They obstruct other people’s affairs and control their lives over an administrative detail or a legal clause. No, a thousand times no! I can no longer bear being an instrument of tyranny, restriction, injustice, and humiliation in the hands of these miserable fools. They have turned me into a sharpened knife that cuts the chest of every poor person who must pay whatever they own to obtain me. They are wretched

people, nothing more than a collection of papers themselves. Without paper, their existence is not recognized."

The page looked astonished. "Have they really become so cheap that their worth is measured and their lives' affairs halted because of me, even though I am only a sheet that a few drops of water could ruin—or printer ink, or a dried-out pen? I am tired of being an instrument of torture in the hands of these cursed clerks."

It sighed wistfully. "Ah, if only I could fly away and rest on an artist's wooden board, beneath the hand of a gifted painter who could transform my white surface into a flourishing garden or an image alive with art and imagination. If only I could rest on a writer's desk, where a storyteller might fill me with tales, feelings, ideas, deep philosophical reflections, and the noblest messages. If only I could lie in the hands of a philosopher or thinker, whose fingers would lay knowledge, profound ideas, and tender feelings upon my blank surface until I became a literary icon, a hymn to thought. Or if only I could be placed in a laboratory, beneath the instruments of a scientist whose discoveries might change the world—not hold it back—and whose inventions and research could move civilization forward. Then I would feel proud and joyful. I would no longer be worth only a set of lifeless rules and regulations. I would become a symbol of creativity, an embodiment of thought, art, or culture; a symbol of enduring knowledge, the strongest weapon in the world. Or perhaps I could simply become blank and pure again, like a newborn child, moving among flowers, playing and leaping, looking at the world with wonder and happiness. What a beautiful thing that innocent, childlike simplicity would be! At least then I would be clean and free of the curse of those foolish clerks. I would escape this foul, useless file and break the bars of this loathsome civil registry. I would fly far away. It is all or nothing."

While the employees remained submerged in paperwork, rules, routine, and shouting, flogging the other pages with their pens, stamps, and signatures, the wandering sheet seized its chance. It slipped quietly between the piled-up pages, unseen by the clerk at the desk, and flew away—still as pure and white as snow. It fluttered beyond the civil registry, ignoring the cries of its companions and refusing to answer their calls. It kept flying through the open air until it could settle wherever it wished, however it wished, and choose for itself the hand that would write upon its tender white body. What would be written? How, where, and when? The page became a manuscript.

End of reflection

THE LAST CUP OF COFFEE

In a small café on the edge of the city, where the wooden tables were worn and time had left its marks on the walls, a writer sat before a cup of coffee from which a faint curl of steam rose, like the last breaths of life. Suddenly Albert Camus appeared, his face tired and his eyes full of questions, and took the seat opposite her.

Camus (quietly, as though whispering into the void): “The only truly serious philosophical question is whether to kill yourself or drink a cup of coffee. Everything else is detail. We are born into a meaningless world and confront an unforgiving absurdity. Do we choose eternal silence, or do we choose a small moment of warmth?”

The writer (staring into her cup before looking up): “I refuse suicide—not because it is a sin, as they say, but because it is surrender. The absurd is not defeated by escape, but confronted. I write to declare that I am here, even if my existence is fleeting, even if it ends in extinction. This cup of coffee is not salvation; it is a declaration that I will hold on to life, if only for a moment.”

Camus (with a sad smile): “Yes, the absurd does not disappear, but it opens a door to revolt. To choose writing instead of silence, coffee instead of the precipice—that is true rebellion. We possess no ready-made meaning, but we can create a moment of beauty amid the ruins.”

The writer (placing her hand around the cup as if embracing the whole world): “Coffee is not merely a drink. It is a symbol of refusing to vanish too

quickly. I write to say that a woman is not a shadow or a servant to sacred texts. I write to prove I can face the absurd without illusions, without Heaven or Hell, with no promise to await—only this cup warming me now."

Camus (raising his head as though addressing the sky): "Then let us drink our coffee and leave suicide to the precipice waiting for us all. The absurd will remain, but we will face it with our words, our revolt, and one last cup of coffee declaring that, if only for a moment, we chose life."

The reflection contains the description, emotions, and symbolism intended by the original note: the café, the cup, the precipice, and the philosophical dialogue. The note then asks whether the title should remain "The Last Cup of Coffee" or be shortened to "A Cup of Coffee" for greater directness. The title is reaffirmed as "The Last Cup of Coffee."

End of reflection

SLEEP PARALYSIS

The question remained silent, yet screamed inside her—a muffled cry groaning beneath the whips of time, decisions, events, and even wishes. It kept trembling on her lips, whispering deep within her, even when she tried to ignore it: What if this quiet road were the one that led to the deepest kind of love, to the innermost reaches of the self, to the calmest territory of inner peace?

He stood before her, cold as a frozen statue, and answered with scorn.

He: "You are cold. Arrogant for no good reason. You have withdrawn so far from the world that you understand nothing about it. You are conceited, domineering, sharp-tongued, and probably wrong about nearly everything. Whatever beauty you once possessed has faded—or at least lost its effect. The youthful spirit is gone, along with the desire you thought was a weapon you could one day use to compensate for what you lacked. Or so you imagined. How shallow and foolish you are!"

She remained composed, watchful, and quietly confident. She turned her back on him in complete disregard.

She: "I did not want to lose myself. I built a fortress to protect me from your evils—or rather, from your ignorance and stupidity. I did not close the door on the world or raise this stronghold between us except to protect myself and preserve the inner peace your masculinity and foolishness had devoured. How many times did I ask you to be careful with my feelings? How often did

I tell you that once you lost me, you would never see me again, no matter how much time passed? When my heart and feelings close, they never reopen. But your meaningless, overbearing masculinity made you blind and deaf to me. You interpreted everything I did, every reaction to your stupidity and coldness, however you pleased. You branded me with the ugliest labels and belittled me, especially in front of others. In reality, you were concealing your own inadequacy and helplessness—the inferiority you always felt in my presence—by criticizing me and making cheap, desperate attempts to diminish me in my own eyes and in the eyes of others.

"You built a mask out of your delusions and then became like someone who tells a lie and eventually believes it. Behind that mask you hid your sense of inadequacy, your helplessness, and your foolishness. You were never a whole man, never confident in yourself, and you never understood me. A glass barrier stood between us. If I tried to break through it, it would slice my veins. I could see you behind it, but I could not reach out without being cut. It was a frightening, cold wall of thick, sharp glass."

His voice tightened with resentment and revulsion.

He: "You should be more honest and transparent. Admit that you never wanted me, that you never missed me as a woman should miss a man, that you never loved me in the first place. If you had wanted to, you could have broken through the barrier. When a woman wants something, she acts; your cunning is great and your schemes endless. But you chose to let that barrier grow, become larger, colder, and sharper. You liked having it there. You wanted the distance. Now you complain and reject me while accusing me of stupidity and neglect. You are a fraud."

She stood, her bitterness stiffening into resolve.

She: "I said I was protecting myself and building a fortress. I did not choose it freely. You forced me to build it, without even realizing what you were doing. And I am glad it happened. I consider myself fortunate that this very barrier opened new horizons for me."

He stared at her, incredulous and mocking.

He: "You are proud of what you have become? Happy with the barrier that brought you to the threshold of loneliness and emptiness? Are you deceiving yourself, trying to raise your own worth so that you do not have to admit that you failed, that you are weak, that you could not build a complete life or a family? Do you hide behind a mask of pride and liberation, pretending to be proud of the wall that separated you from me? What a fool!"

Her confidence was edged with revulsion, impatience, and weariness.

She: "You will never understand what I mean. Your ability to comprehend is limited; your narrow outlook will prevent you even from trying to understand me. My strength, you fool, lies in the solitude you mock. It is a kingdom

whose every corner I built through struggle and sacrifice, until I finally escaped your cruel rock, which had blocked my breath and hidden the light and air from me. I built a kingdom out of my solitude, a world that gave me strength and authority. I explored the deepest recesses of myself and broke the cursed chain that had always cut into my wrists. I hated it from the very first moment, because it robbed me of myself and overwhelmed my whole being. Every night I looked into the mirror and saw a deep crack no one else could see—a fracture in my soul, a division within my being—and asked in sorrow: Who am I? What am I? I could no longer find myself. My own self had become lost to me in your barren desert, a wasteland full of hyenas and deadly snakes, sunk in darkness beneath a scorching sun.

"Even a desert can sometimes inspire, but not yours. Your desert is repellent and desolate, covered in thorns beneath a shroud of pitch-black darkness, foul in color, smell, and touch. It is a wilderness full of monsters that devoured my identity and nearly destroyed my existence. My strength lies in my solitude, in the door I slammed shut against your dark, loathsome presence, which had weighed upon me. I will never open that door to your storm again. You would make me a miserable feather at the mercy of furious winds, foul with the stench of carcasses, filth, and refuse."

She turned toward him, disgust written across her face. "Do you know what those foul smells are? They are the stench of the relationship that once bound me to your cursed chain. That time is over. It will never return, whatever the cost. It was a relationship that sent me spinning in a vicious circle, looking for the missing link in a failed social order made entirely of false masks. I always felt I was living in a farce, playing a role that was not mine. The false role, burdened by the shackles of that cold relationship disguised as virtue, was never meant for me. The partnership was filthy with hypocrisy and deceit, as though we were acting in a ridiculous television series or a badly written play, with feeble dialogue and a threadbare plot.

"You fool! Did you mistake my strength for weakness, my solitude for escape or defeat? No. A thousand times no. My solitude is royal strength; it has made me blue-blooded. It has raised me above every woman who remains a humiliated captive, imprisoned in a tangled, distorted relationship or a failed performance. I am a free queen in an age of slaves."

He could barely contain his anger.

He: "So you decided to live alone, to dispense with me—and with all men? You boast of your solitude and your own kingdom, calling yourself blue-blooded?"

She: "A man like you cannot understand. While others—women and men alike—try to fill themselves through external contacts and social approval, I turned inward. I made contact with myself and discovered who I was. I searched my depths and brought out treasures of wisdom and knowledge, then polished them into a jewel of literature, creativity, and writing. I shaped

a message in my own blue blood, the royal blood of freedom, put it in a bottle, and cast it into the vast ocean of life, certain someone would find it and carry it forward, shouting its words aloud."

He smirked as though exposing her.

He: "But that is not how you used to feel. You once dreamed of love and made it your god, the ruler of every decision. You told me of your adolescent dreams: without love, you would choose no one and might not even choose to live. Love, you believed, would lead you to your other half and to paradise, and you would sacrifice anything for it. Wasn't love the eternal crown of your kingdom? Now you are trying to deceive me, pretending to have shed your romantic skin. No one can escape their own nature or change their blood. You still seek love. Be honest: you never accepted it from me because you wanted it from someone else. I was never your dream boy or the man you had imagined. You projected your sick fantasies onto me, then accused me of everything and turned life into rejection, hostility, and conflict."

She: "You said it yourself: that was when I was an adolescent. You have admitted it was once. The past tense matters. That naïveté ended; it will not return. Even if others cannot change their skins, I have done what you call impossible, you weak traditionalist. You have always followed the herd, flattering hypocrites to win their favor even when you despised them. You wear a false face and march with the crowd. You choose whatever identity pleases your society so that everyone will approve of you, rather than the identity that pleases you.

"You were never my man. Neither you nor any other man has ever been, or ever will be, mine. You were a shackle that cut my wrists. My only—and greatest—mistake was that I once gave too much and dreamed too much. I gave until I exhausted all my old wounds. I have not rejected love, nor stopped believing in it, as you claim. I have rejected what others call love: cheap, possessive attachment, false and self-serving, shackled by desire and appetite. It is a sickness, not love; an illusion, not truth; a deceptive mirage, never a certainty.

"Love is an ocean too vast to be contained in this filthy relationship, this partnership surrounded by hypocrisy, restrictions, boredom, and coldness. From its first day the relationship yawned like a frail, sick, cold old woman longing only to die and rest. I put that wretched, exhausted old woman out of her misery because her endless wailing had narrowed my chest, split my head, and stolen my sense of self. I killed the old woman that was this toxic, soul-destroying relationship. Even love—or what you call love—becomes a chain and a disease when forced into that narrow, ridiculous frame, whether inside a hateful partnership or outside it.

"Love is far greater than that. It is love of an idea, of a principle, of exploring the depths of the self; love of freedom. Love is a message, a cry sent out to the world and to humanity. It is remaking the world through your ideas, leaving

your mark on the universe and declaring, 'Here I am.' Love is refusing to surrender and fighting for your purpose. It is spreading truth—or at least its outlines. It is lighting a candle in the minds of those around you, in the darkness of life, so they can reshape their own thoughts. That is love. I arrived at this understanding after freeing myself from my old naïveté and then breaking the cursed chain you claimed would fulfill some of my dreams.

"I drank from that rushing river, believing it was sweet, only to fill myself with water that could neither quench my thirst nor heal my wounds. With you, I was like someone fleeing the scorching sun only to take refuge in fire. How miserable I was when I was caught in your web—or in someone else's. You all sat on my chest for too long. I watched the days of my life pass through a storm of emptiness and terrible silence that exhausted me, devoured my selfhood, violated my freedom, and nearly destroyed me. I stood by in shock, fighting windmills, trying to steady my confusion and comfort my sorrow, patting the years of my life and my future on the shoulder as they nearly disappeared beneath the lashes of your ignorance, stupidity, and masculine obstinacy. A vast gulf between your person and my own self, identity, and thought tore me apart. Then it was time to leave—and return to myself.

"How wretched and foolish you men are! You are creatures of folly. Your place is among backward crowds, tribal societies, and the underdevelopment of the Third World. We—the free women who have liberated ourselves in an age of slaves—belong among civilization and progress. See how wide the distance is between my station and yours, you fool. You sold me a great lie, which I believed and lived inside for years. But now, at last, I have awakened. My whole being has risen in revolt. I am removing from my chest a heavy, dark stone that paralyzed me and threatened to erase me. I have learned the secret, and there will be no going back. My solitude is the chief executive of my freedom, mind, and awareness. I make my own decisions now, without needing to consider how they affect another party. I am president of my own republic.

"You exhausted my memory and filled it with every kind of worry and ruin until I nearly aged or died of grief, watching myself burn like a tiny candle in your pitch darkness. I was like someone planting seeds and watering barren land where no crop could grow. My mind grew old inside your toxic relationship. Now it is young again, full of freshness and vigor, building a bright future whose light you always tried to extinguish. I was asleep; now I am awake. I no longer care whether you stay or leave. In truth, I want you gone and I will work toward that end. My solitude saved my life, and I will not abandon it for any creature. I am courting myself, speaking with myself, and living again."

He searched desperately for words with which to conceal his flaws. "How cruel, arrogant, and domineering you are!"

She interrupted him firmly. The scene shifted to a cold intellectual space lit by the dry light of truth. She stood upright, while he clung to the fading shadow of male authority.

She: "Stop, man. Do not summon your old vocabulary; its illusions have expired. You were a failed laboratory experiment in my life, and I emerged with definitive results: the love you sold me was a chemical substance that evaporated quickly, and the traditional marriage you offered was an attempt to enslave a person under the name of 'home.' I tried to be loyal to you. I tried to ignore my mind and humble myself before my heart, hoping to find a human being in you. Instead, I found a wife expected to serve by day and act as a vessel for your desires by night."

He: "But I was the man! Didn't I give you safety? Didn't my religion provide authority and protection? Nature says you are the weaker part and I am your support. Why reject the nature in which women were made? I was not betraying you; I was exercising a natural right given to me by society and history."

She (with a cold laugh): "Nature? What kind of nature sanctifies inferiority? Your patriarchal religion, which elevated your degraded status, is merely a myth manufactured by backward societies, especially in places where ignorance flourishes and minds are shackled by legends and delusions. But today I have awakened. Once you—and your religion—left my life, the air became clean again and the colors returned to my soul after fading beneath your shadow. The farther I move from you, the more whole I become. My happiness becomes complete only as your presence diminishes within me."

He fell into a pit of fear and collapse, realizing that he faced a woman whose resolve could not be broken by worn-out emotions. She left him behind, wreckage from a bygone era.

Her final words: "Go back to your tribes of ignorance and superstition. Your place is in the depths; mine is at the summit, where true sovereignty belongs to those who possess reason and freedom."

End of reflection

THE GAP

In a thunderous expanse of silence, a wolf stood tall, a creature with a sharp, instinctive nobility in its eyes, facing a human being swollen with pride in his own species and convinced of his superiority over all other living things.

The human (with pious arrogance, approaching cautiously): “Why are you looking at me like that, wolf? Get out of my way. I have a weapon, and I am not afraid of you. If you imagine for a moment that you can devour me or attack me in this silence, you are mistaken. Not only do I have a weapon; I am human. I think, analyze, understand, and reason. My mind enables me to avoid any danger. I am nobler and higher than you. Do not let pride mislead you into thinking you can frighten me or that I am inferior because I am vulnerable. God has favored me over all His creatures and subjected you, an animal, to serve me. One bullet could kill you, and I could make use of your fur and skin in countless ways. Move aside, and stop staring at me with that foolish defiance. I am superior because I am human, the finest of creatures, and God made you to serve me. Know your place. I am God’s vicegerent on earth and master of this planet.”

The wolf (in a deep voice, sharp as a hard thought): “I did not stand in your way to harm you, devour you, or belittle you. I stopped to look at you and ask where this difference between us came from. Who made this vast distance, this bottomless gulf that placed you above and me below simply because I am an animal? I wanted to investigate it for myself: what distinguishes you from

me, and makes you deserving—according to your own account—of higher rank, honor, and dignity?"

The human laughed loudly, contemptuously.

The human: "What a ridiculous joke! What stupidity, to turn the order of things upside down. Are you so foolish that you block my way to investigate the difference between us? Does it require an explanation? Look at yourself and look at me. I walk on two feet; you walk on four. However high you lift your head, it remains close to the ground. You wag a tail; I have none, because I am more exalted. I am human, formed from noble clay, descended from Adam, the father of humankind. No one knows your origin or how God created you. The scriptures say nothing about it, while they tell how I was fashioned from pure, clinging clay and given a breath from the divine. Perhaps you were made from water, a demon, or something else; the texts do not explain.

"I build up the world with knowledge. I construct homes, schools, and universities. I learn, speak, express myself, explain, teach, and study. I can become a scientist, doctor, teacher, or any number of useful things. You, meanwhile, walk on four legs wagging your tail, eat raw meat or scraps tossed by the roadside, and search for food among flies, filth, and garbage. I dine in luxurious restaurants, sleep on fine beds, and sit on soft sofas. You lie on roads or piles of dirt; at best your home is a shabby hut, a distant cave, or an animal pen. After all that, you ask what separates us? The difference is as clear as the blazing midday sun."

The wolf regarded him with a calm, knowing smile.

The wolf: "Is it fair, merciful, or even logical that the God to whom you owe such gratitude should leave you wandering in ignorance after all your knowledge, analysis, studies, and research? Why should you know so little about the other creatures—the animals like me who share your world? Is it reasonable that your God never explained how I and other animals came to be? Why does this question remain unresolved among your books and legal opinions?

"And is it merciful to create creatures like me only to let us meet our ends as strays in the streets, scavenging one another or begging for scraps from garbage? Is it mercy for an animal to live every day, every minute, beneath a butcher's knife wielded by the very human who claims to be superior? Have you never wondered why your merciful God did not simply create trees that bear meat, or some equivalent nourishment, so that you could eat without slaughtering us? Is He incapable of doing so, or is it too difficult for Him?

"You claim to be educated, literate, and capable of reason. Yet why does your supposed God allow animal blood to be spilled and the earth to be flooded with the remains of creatures you slaughter every day? Why permit their carcasses to rot, their remains to attract flies, and their stench to spread?

Have you ever considered why living things feed on one another, as though nature were a cycle in which all consume something else? Humans feed on animals, animals prey on other animals, and some live on plants. Snakes and birds devise tricks to trap other birds. Do you eat because you must, or starve. Where is your God when you kill stray dogs or hunt bears for their fur? Did He create these creatures to suffer? Could He not have given them protection from life's cruelty?

"Nor has He even protected you, the human being you claim He honored. Where is He when children with cancer die in hospitals? How can a supposedly benevolent God allow children to die in wars and famines, or people to be killed unjustly by stray bullets or quarrels in which they had no part? Where is He when a woman is raped by vile men of your own species while He sits in the heights of heaven and watches in silence? Is He powerless, or so cruel? What of car crashes, train disasters, and serial killers who dismember innocent people merely to satisfy hatred and revenge?

"You call yourselves the noblest species, yet you kill out of spite and hatred, take bribes, and humiliate yourselves for money. Some of you murder and dismember another human being, stuffing the pieces into bags for greed, theft, or a base desire. Your God has not guaranteed care even for the humans He supposedly chose and favored above all worlds, much less animals and plants. What kind of God is that? And on what grounds do you boast of your species when its behavior exposes such shame?

"Do animals kill for revenge? Do they bear human grudges, envy one another, or chase money? We need no money or clothes to cover our nakedness—or, more accurately, to hide our scandals. We have no shameful secrets to conceal. We are not mere papers and documents held by the state, without which we supposedly do not exist. Is this what divine honor means for you: becoming a sheet of paper, a bundle of documents? What a strange honor! I and the other animals do not need such things to establish our existence. You study us in schools and universities, know our species and habitats, and classify us without identity cards or proof of registration. If being reduced to paper is honor, then congratulations to us animals for not being human."

The human, visibly tense and faltering, replied that he had never asked these questions. His holy book—whether the Qur'an, Gospel, or Torah—explained what mattered to him. Why waste time thinking about the nonsense of an animal that could not understand such matters? He trusted that God was wise and knowledgeable, with a reason for every event. God had commanded submission and obedience, and human beings existed to worship Him, while humans were appointed to cultivate the earth and remind others of divine greatness.

The wolf laughed sarcastically.

The wolf: “Does your trust in this supposed God turn you into a creature led like livestock? You surrender to His words as an animal surrenders its neck to the butcher’s sharp knife, or as a flock follows a shepherd without question. Is that trust? What a miserable trust, one that diminishes your ability to think and understand, erases your dignity, and turns you into a meek slave who lives only to bow, kneel, and plead before an invisible being you have never seen or heard. Is it truly trust, or a legacy of ignorance and myths?

“Do you deny that you inherited your religion from your family? Every human child is born into a religion that contradicts and competes with others. Each inherits its beliefs and submits to its texts without discussion. Each group claims to be right and calls the others misguided. You run a religious marathon, panting after a mirage—a deception passed down by priests, clerics, and contemptible allies of political power. They played with your minds and promised another life after death so you would not demand the real life you have now, the only one you are certain to experience.

“Look me in the eyes and answer: is that honor and trust, or humiliation, submission, delusion, and falsehood? While others have moved forward, your societies remain trapped in illusion. I see nothing in you that proves you are superior to me. Perhaps I am nobler: I do not hate, murder, steal, or rape. I am not a piece of paper. At least no false god has deceived me, and no cleric has persuaded me that I am better than other beings for his own profit or that of those in power.

“I am the wolf whose nobility and loyalty you yourselves celebrate, using my name to praise courage or independence. When you describe intelligence, you call someone a wolf or a fox; when you describe stupidity, you invoke the poor donkey that carries your burdens without thanks while you beat it to make it go faster. When you praise a strong, distinctive will, you tell someone to be an eagle and not move like the herd. If you are so superior, why do you constantly compare one another to us? We need no identity papers, money, speech, education certificates, or official records for our presence to matter. Yet you still imagine that you are infinitely important simply because a priest has played with your weak mind.

“You are a creature among creatures, like animal and plant, part of nature’s cycle. Biologically, you die, rot, and become a corpse returning to the earth. You have damaged this planet more than any other creature: you burn forests, cut trees, kill animals, and spill blood. Your harm far exceeds your benefit. And you do not even understand how you came to be. You imagine you were molded from clay and given a father named Adam. What a fantastic tale! Even a child might doubt it, and a skilled novelist would struggle to make the plot convincing. You do not know how I came to exist, either. You are ignorant, gullible, and naïve, your mind burdened by mountains of inherited religious myths. You have become a foolish creature who believes in illusion, moved by a stick and tempted by a carrot that does not exist,

living on false promises and imaginary bliss, with eternal torment in a sick imagination."

The human, furious and stunned as though struck by an electric shock, stammered: "What are you saying? Do you deny that I was created from clay and that Adam was my father? If you boast that your existence needs no papers or education, can you tell me where I came from if I was not formed from clay and Adam never existed? And if you mock me because I do not know how you, an animal, were created, can you tell me how you and I came into existence? If you claim to be truthful, answer me."

Theological Debate: The Absurdity of an Absent God

The human (hesitantly): "My faith says a Creator gave us minds with which to judge and set boundaries for you."

The wolf (with cutting logic): "Let me explain through the logic of the pig and the donkey. If there were a perfect and just God, why create a creature only to humiliate and despise it without cause? Why call the donkey's voice the ugliest of sounds? Why demean the pig and forbid its flesh? Such conduct would not resemble a perfect God, but a petty narcissist who needs to humiliate His creatures to sustain His own supposed pride. The existence of an innocent pig, condemned and insulted through no fault of its own, is a severe challenge to the idea of a just God—or suggests that your creator is no more than a malicious liar. Do I hate these creatures? No. I see them as victims of you and of your illusions.

"And here is the surprise you did not expect from someone you call an animal: your supposed creation from clay and your imaginary father Adam are myths, inherited from religious stories. I have not lived inside those illusions; no one has deceived me with them. You and I, like all living beings, evolved from shared ancestors. Do not make the foolish claim that this means your origin or mine was a modern monkey. That is a mistake in your own description. Our ancestors shared genes; branches separated and evolved into different animal lineages and into the human lineage. Those ancestors had a mixture of features: a tail, a bent back, and arms hanging forward, like the four-legged creatures you insulted a moment ago. Over time, natural processes shaped bodies to live in different environments and move upright where that was advantageous. Look at the curve at the base of your spine, where a tail once extended—the very tail you used to mock me. Look at the similarities between humans and other animals in appearance and behavior. Did all these similarities come from nothing, or are they evidence of evolution in living things, including human beings, physically, mentally, and socially? Early Homo sapiens and earlier humans shared features with other primates, including chimpanzees, because of common ancestry—not because humans are descended from modern chimpanzees. A chimpanzee is one branch; humans are another. You even fail to use accurate words because religion has clouded your understanding.

“All living beings, you and I included, change and adapt to their environments over generations through natural selection. Nature is sparing, choosing what fits; useful inherited differences can accumulate and improve a lineage’s chances of survival. These changes happen slowly across generations and can, over time, give rise to new species. You have made this unfortunate planet miserable through brutality, recklessness, and unjustified arrogance.

“But the larger question remains: if a god exists, can you explain why he left you ignorant of where the animals sharing your planet came from? Why do your books not clearly tell you what animals are or how their lineages began? You live beside animals, sometimes raise them in your own homes, boast of your education, and call yourselves the most advanced beings on Earth, yet you cannot answer a simple question about their origins. Why do they have no father like your supposed Adam? Did God lack the ability to explain it, or was He unable? Is He responsible only for fashioning clay, pottery, and stone? Did He avoid the subject because it was embarrassing, or simply leave it without an answer?”

Sweat gathered on the human’s face. His words tangled on his lips.

The human: “I…I do not know how to answer. All I know is that God has wisdom in everything. He determined the limits of our minds and spared us the burden of questioning. He has His own order as God, and we are His servants. Not every act needs to be explained to us. It is enough to know that He is all-knowing and wise. Why should I exhaust myself searching into His creation? He knows His creatures and His actions better than I do.”

The wolf (with bitter irony): “Exactly. That is what your supposed God—created in the image fashioned for you by priests, rulers, and religious authorities—would want: for you to become blind, hearing only the echo of your imagined master, unable to speak except in praise and certainty about a wisdom you cannot demonstrate. This god has killed your thought while leaving you alive. He has crippled your awareness and understanding, surrounding them with an impenetrable fence against analysis, comprehension, and doubt. He has made you a captive, a humiliated servant of an illusion and a myth. Rust has accumulated on your mind. Your imaginary god has killed thought and turned you into a human machine awaiting commands. And the tragedy is that this master may not exist at all; he is a crude fictional plot that neither a child nor an adult should have to accept without question.

“If you offered us animals or plants a choice, none of us would choose to descend into the delusion that imprisons you. We would rather remain animals or plants than become a member of this hateful, violent, criminal, arrogant, and deceived species that calls itself the highest of all. You are the lowest in cruelty and wrongdoing.”

The wolf paused, then returned to the central question of suffering. If an omnipotent, merciful being governed the world, why did predators have to kill to live? Why did creatures suffer from hunger, illness, and violence? Why were humans abandoned to disease, war, accidents, rape, murder, and disasters? The wolf's argument was not that animals were innocent of every act of violence, but that the human claim to unique moral superiority and special divine favor was unsupported by the very world the human celebrated as perfectly ordered.

The human tried to retreat into revelation and submission, saying his scripture had given him all the answers he needed and that the divine will was beyond question. The wolf challenged this answer as inherited obedience rather than independent reasoning, arguing that the certainty each religious community claimed for itself was usually acquired by birth and upbringing, not by examining competing claims.

The wolf, in closing: "Look at dolphins and whales, and at the intelligence of trained dogs that serve you with a loyalty you often do not deserve. Many animals show forms of intelligence that surpass yours; given the chance to learn and communicate in human ways, they might outdo you. We do not need a religious illusion to prevent us from slaughtering one another, because our nature is nobler than your arrogance. You are not the most exalted. You are among the most destructive, absurd, and conceited beings in existence, deceived about both your origins and your morals."

The human (lowering his head as the scale of his error dawned on him): "I never imagined that an animal's arguments could be more logical and honest than everything I studied and was told. Now, wolf, I see in your eyes a nobility, intelligence, and dignity that surpass those of many humans. Your gaze burns away their pride, leaving only crumbling wreckage scattered by the wind."

The human withdrew with his head bowed in shame, defeated by arguments grounded in science and ethics, and forced to confront the possibility that the animal was nobler than he had ever admitted.

End of reflection

BIRTH CERTIFICATE

Name of the newborn: A creative writer and author
Nationality: Living being
Place of birth: The unhappy planet Earth, threatened with extinction and ravaged by a savage creature called humankind
Date of birth: The day of liberation from social constraints, inherited illusions, and religious and communal beliefs; the day of freedom
Month: Breaking free of chains and rigid molds
Year: Revolt against the superstitions of religion and society
Religion: No religion. No gods. No myths or legends of any kind
Father: Principle
Mother: Freedom
Family: Scientific, literary, artistic, and cultural creativity
National identity number: Every number marking a goal reached, an aim achieved, or another step taken toward greatness and success

The traditional birth certificate burst into mocking laughter.

Traditional Birth Certificate: "What nonsense are you writing on yourself, you foolish sheet? You are not a birth certificate; you are ignorant and delirious. No one will ever read these words, and no one will recognize them. You will remain unknown forever."

Free Birth Certificate: "And who are these fools whose recognition you think I need? Do you mean the clerks who move like mindless machines, unable to breathe or think, or like biological statues that happen to speak?

They mean nothing to me. It would be no honor to be recognized by them—or by anyone else. It is enough that I have discovered my true self, explored my depths, and defined my own being. What do I have to do with conventional fools like you? Tell me: what are you so proud of, and on what grounds do you accuse me of stupidity and naïveté?"

Traditional Birth Certificate (with arrogance and confidence): "I am an official document, recognized and certified by the state and the civil registry. My details are the details all human beings need; they rely on me to conduct their affairs. Without me, the universe would come to a standstill. Is that not reason enough to boast?"

The free certificate looked at it with scorn. "The nonsense written across your face is useless to me. No state or government recognizes my words, and no official business depends on them. Only you need to place yourself before your eyes and admire yourself, while I fill your heart and soul with freedom. Nobody needs you, nobody cares for you, and nobody seeks you except when they must. You serve no one's life; no one actually wants you."

Free Birth Certificate: "Enough of your ignorance and folly. You are not worth a clipping from a fingernail. What do you boast of? What achievement gives you honor? You own nothing of what is written on you, and you deserve no credit for what these imprisoned, humiliated people require. They need you only because they are confined within life's chains and lie behind its bars. They do not use you out of love, but out of necessity, and their hearts are filled with resentment toward the stale routine that clings to your hollow words.

"Your details are merely biological facts. Those whose names, fathers, and mothers are written on you did not choose them. They did not choose their country or a religion full of myths and delusions. They did not choose their parents, birthplace, or date of birth. I am certain that, if you asked them—and if they could act freely—many would tear you into shreds. They did not choose the things written across your face. You have drowned them in the curse of an existence they did not request, perhaps did not want, and whose terms were imposed before they could speak. They endure you reluctantly and resentfully. That alone should make you bow your head in shame. What have you offered them except inherited conditions, unfulfilled wishes, unwanted countries, and families they might have wished to leave? You imposed all this upon them through temporary biological chance. It ends with another yellow certificate announcing the decay of their bodies and their return to nothingness.

"You have offered them humiliation and bitterness. Even the happy ones have never felt indebted to you. You deprived them of the freedom to choose their own identities and imposed a temporary existence they never asked for."

Traditional Birth Certificate (dismissively): “And what have you given them, after that grand speech hurled at me like a shell?”

Free Birth Certificate (with pride and confidence): “I have given them everything that exists: freedom. I have offered them another life above their biological one. I have given their memory a form of immortality, transforming them from temporary organisms with limited agency and choice into beings able to choose a true identity—the one they select for themselves, not the one imposed on them.

“I have given them an enduring life. They can remain present even after death because they have chosen their own names, names that express their selves; they have chosen the place where they created and contributed, rather than the place where they happened to be born. They have chosen their own birthday: the day their freedom was born, the day they defended their ideas and left their true imprint on Earth, the day their voices reached others through ideas, books, scientific discoveries, literature, and thought that changed the world. That is the birth certificate they made for themselves, one that grants an enduring life, freedom, and a self they can be proud of.

“I am a profound cry reverberating across the universe, a bright and powerful imprint that commands admiration and respect. You, by contrast, are only a sheet that time folds away and everyone forgets, turning yellow as soon as the brief need for you has passed. They were forced to need you, and only temporarily. Their need for me gives them the immortality they chose and pursued, through which they found their selves and achieved their goals.”

The traditional birth certificate folded in on itself, bowed its head in shame, and withdrew, dragging the tails of defeat and regret behind it. It lay in a desk drawer in some government office. The free birth certificate remained upright like an eagle, its wings pouring brilliant light over the universe—the light of knowledge and civilization. People stood transfixed by its beauty and power, watching from afar, dreaming of it, and turning their eyes toward it in the hope of finding a new birth and refuge: the true identity they had long been searching for.

End of reflection

TWO WINGS

I heard the sound of my own cries for help as I lay inside a dark, foul-smelling, bottomless pit, wrapped in its dense darkness like a filthy black cloak. The stench seemed to seep from every fold: oppression, servitude, exploitation, disgust, and revulsion. What suffocating narrowness! What anguish I endured! Night had fallen, and the shadows of cursed shackles closed around me. I was alone, exhausted and burdened with chains that drained my strength, broke me apart, and demolished me from within. I no longer felt like anything but a wandering ghost, a colorless, meaningless thing—as though I were nothingness within nothingness, sinking into a sea of extinction and a mirage of humiliation. Each day and night, a heavy, hateful, faded shadow settled over me, like a foul black stone, stinking and weighty, stubbornly pressing down on my breath until it nearly extinguished it. Still I called for help from deep within that cursed pit, hoping someone might come and throw me a rope, or even a thread of hope, a ray of light to illuminate the darkness of my extinguished soul.

After many thoughts and desperate cries, she came to me. She hurried to my rescue and listened to my plea. She did not hesitate or falter; she rushed forward, reaching out both hands to pull me from the foul abyss and the sinister darkness that had almost destroyed me. She quickly lowered a rope and pulled with force, determination, and stubborn resolve until she lifted me from the depths of the hell in which I had been trapped. With every movement upward, with every inch of the rope, I recovered my breath in a

single rush. Life returned to me; its fragrance flowed through my body, and I inhaled the intoxicating, sweet breezes that gradually wrapped around me.

Panting, I told her, “My dearest, you are the only one who came to save me. No one else rescued me but you. You flow through my blood. I love you, my dearest, with a love that a thousand books and references could not adequately praise or repay. You are the sun that illuminates the universe, the true sun; everything other than you is impenetrable darkness.”

She laughed with delight, smiling broadly, and answered with confidence and assurance.

“I love you too, my dear. I never hesitate to answer your call or help you, whatever effort it costs me. I love those who love me and value those who value me. I belong only to the one who welcomes my breezes within them, the one worthy of me, the one prepared to lose everything precious in life for my sake. When such a person calls, I will never be late. I will come at once.”

Then she spread her two broad, enormous wings. With confidence and joy, she turned toward me, carried me upon them, and flew far away, soaring through the sky.

“Come,” she said, “you and I will go to the Land of Dreams. It is the most suitable place for us. We can live there together in an eternal life, undisturbed by anyone.”

I asked, “What is the Land of Dreams? I have never heard of it before.”

“It is my place and yours, our own land. Perhaps we were brought into this life only to find it. It is a land spacious enough for us and for the plants, birds, and animals. They are your loved ones, and you have always spoken to me about them.”

“Yes, I love them deeply. Do you know why?”

“Why?”

“Because I see you embodied in them. You live vividly in their lives. I see you clearly in every step these creatures take; your generous shade covers their existence. Even if you are not absolute or perfect, what you have given them is enough. They receive your breezes in a sufficient measure, and that is why I love them. In truth, I love you, because wherever they live, wherever they go, I find myself looking for you.”

She sighed, and a dense cloud of sorrow crossed her face.

“I could not—or rather, I cannot and will not—shade the lives of those others: those wretched beings weighed down by chains of humiliation and slavery. Those fools who boast of their own servitude, who take pride in being lowly slaves, bent beneath harsh laws that restrict their movements and nearly count their breaths. Their souls are filled with malice, evil, spite, and hatred. I came to despise them and recoil from their stupidity and resentment. I

never wanted to be part of their lives, because they do not deserve me and are not worthy of me. Their humiliating, submissive lives force them every day and night to bow their heads to the ground before illusion and mirage. These fools even boast of their own foolishness and degradation. They surrender willingly, surrounded by expensive walls and shackles made of fear, humiliation, oppression, and cruelty. So I turned away from them and fled, as a healthy person flees from the plague."

I sighed too, releasing a long breath hot with sorrow and weariness, and replied, "I am exactly like you. I too have grown to hate them, retreat from them, and keep my distance, as though I did not belong to their species. The only things that connect me to them are outward appearance and the base instincts that control both them and me. But in truth, I am not one of them. I have always felt foreign among them.

"They are what they are because they are human: a hateful species, among the basest living things, the least free and most enslaved. Human beings are full of malice and greed. Temptation shades them; deception, fraud, and evasion protect them. Their ugly ambitions emerge in the form of rancor, and their evil drips from them. They are nothing but paper. Without paper, they are nothing. Each individual is a sheet bearing a name, a sex, a date of birth, and a home address, plus another sheet for work, identity, or an official card. They need names to introduce themselves to one another, money, and countless other things. They are nothing more than a collection of documents, and these papers are what summarize and certify their existence."

I spoke with distaste, breathing out a hot sigh that met her sorrowful face.

"How wretched they are, how miserable their condition! They are shackled with chains and fetters made of paper, and without those chains they have no recognized existence. What a wretched and foolish existence—a life that scarcely exists at all! Nothingness and extinction are more dignified, more complete, more unified, and freer than this. What a pitiful, contemptible existence. Worst of all, they boast of their humiliation. They take pride in being slaves: slaves to earning their daily bread, slaves to paper restraints, slaves who bow beneath burdens too heavy to bear. They are slaves to evil that takes hold inside them, dripping its poison into their souls until they become killers, criminals, thieves, bribe-takers, forgers, fraudsters, and liars. Or they become slaves to an imaginary being whose existence they merely presume, pleading with it out of fear, hoping for its approval and reward, terrified of its punishment.

"They have accepted humiliation, even celebrated it. They have sanctified it in the form of sacred illusions. They love their degradation and boast of it to the point of disgrace. How could you, so complete and elevated, so proud and dignified, consent to exist among these ruffians? How could I embody myself in a species that calls itself the highest, the most favored, the noblest—when

the reality is so far from that claim? Sadly, they submit to liars and frauds who hide behind an imaginary veil of virtue and pretend to possess the truth, though they are nowhere near it. The gulf between truth and perfection, on the one hand, and the fictions they claim on the other, is immense. Yet people praise and applaud those impostors, celebrate them, and take pride in them! How foolish and wretched this species is. It is moved only by a stick: fear drives it, a whip guides it, and a carrot tempts it forward as it hurries in obedience, afraid of punishment and greedy for a reward."

I looked around. In the Land of Dreams, I saw only animals and birds, spreading their wings and devouring the breadth of the sky. I saw trees and plants, and breathed in their fragrance until my smile widened and filled my cheeks. I answered her:

"This blessed land is inhabited only by these beautiful creatures. They need no papers to prove their existence. They are known without documents, and their value is greater than paper shackles. They do not kill, steal, hate, or commit crimes. If one of them hunts or kills, it is to obtain food, not out of hatred, revenge, or malice. They are not sent to prisons or tortured in detention centers. They are not bound by papers that make them nobodies when those papers are absent. They roam as they please. No curfew is imposed upon them. They come and go without a watcher or judge, yet each is answerable to itself and bears responsibility for its own actions. They are not forever treated as suspects or accused of something. They are far greater than that.

"Look at the birds in the sky, flying above with transparency and purity. Then look down at the bottom, at humankind walking on two feet. Shackles and restrictions surround them and everything they touch. They are imprisoned in their clothes, their bodies, their greed, their hatred, their resentment—and in the whole system of their lives. Birds soar in the open air above them; and where above is above, below is below, because the lower place is the one that suits human beings.

"Animals and plants do not need clothes. Without them, they are not naked; when they remove them, they are not immoral. They are not guilty, perverse, or debauched for failing to wear garments. They do not need special specifications for clothes, because they do not need them at all—not because they are inferior, but the opposite: because they are freer, less constrained, and more elevated. They have risen beyond the need to dress. Without clothes, they are whole and complete, lacking nothing. This corrupt species, by contrast, is called incomplete, indecent, shameless, mad, or perverted without its garments. Clothes are not merely another paper; they are also a piece of fabric that conceals them. They hide their sins, their lowliness, and as much of their evil as possible. They are yet another chain added to their many chains.

“So where are they in relation to me, and where am I in relation to them? What evidence gives them the right to claim a higher place? They are bound creatures. No matter how much they build, cultivate, or construct, I see them as lower and less worthy. Yet they persist in their foolishness with conceit and empty arrogance, like a hollow drum that produces nothing but a harsh, irritating noise while imagining itself the highest, most advanced, most important being in existence.”

She looked at me with confidence and asked, “Tell me: which is happier, freer, and more elevated—the wonderful creatures here in the Land of Dreams, or that cursed species in the Land of Nightmares and Catastrophes?”

I smiled with an inward sense of calm and peace. “You ask me, yet the answer is in your eyes and dripping from your lips.”

She carried me upon her great wings and flew with me over the broad, open spaces of the Land of Dreams. “You are the only one I chose and preferred from among that hateful species, the only one I selected to remain with me always.” She continued to glide through the vastness, patting me with her wing and rocking me gently, like a child sleeping peacefully in the arms of a tender mother.

She was the freedom I had chosen and preferred—and each of us was the right choice for the other.

End of reflection

VANISHING

Lately, he had taken to turning away and showing her his back. She knelt before him, pleading, reminding him of all their past happiness, victories, and joys. Her voice broke into sobs, and tears fell to her lips.

She: "What has happened to you? What has come over you? You were never this cruel, and now you insist once again on disappointing me, turning your back with such harshness. Tell me what I have done to you. What wrong have I committed? Do not leave me like a feather tossed about in the wind, battered and played with by the storms inside my head. I am nearly going mad. I cannot understand why you have become like this, why you keep letting me down, again and again."

He still faced away from her. He sighed, and his words came fractured with sorrow.

He: "It is over. My companions, my equals, and I have decided to leave you and withdraw for good. You can find happiness somewhere away from me—and from them. There are many paths to happiness."

She: "But you are the only one responsible for my happiness. How can I find another way without you? You and your companions are the central axis around which life revolves. Life is a collection of days; days are made of hours, hours of minutes, and before them, seconds. Where am I to find happiness if you and your companions abandon me? You form a team called the week; weeks turn into months, months into a year, and years into years

upon years. At their root, all of them are made of you. Before my eyes, you shape my life—a collection of days, months, and years. How can I find happiness away from you? Tell me, where should I travel in this difficult road, darkened by nights that seem to stretch on forever, when life itself, if only you knew, is short?"

He answered stubbornly, with a sharp edge to his voice.

He: "You can find happiness in something else: a hobby you love, music you listen to, or even a practice of meditation."

She sobbed, pain tearing at her wounded spirit.

She: "I have tried. I have tried desperately to keep sadness away. I have tried to find happiness without you, to ignore you, forget you, even remove you from my calculations, as if you had never existed. But all my attempts have been in vain. Do you know why? Because you refused. With stubborn determination, you denied me every other door to happiness and threw me, against my will, onto the stage of life to act this ridiculous play with you at every moment—as though you took pleasure in tormenting me.

"How can I find happiness elsewhere if you refuse to allow it? How can you ask me to do so when you have no intention of letting me? You know perfectly well that if you are cruel to me and take happiness away, nothing else can give it back. Why do you evade me and persist in deceiving me? Why do you pretend to be innocent, wearing the fleece of a gentle lamb while a savage beast hides inside you, tearing at my soul, identity, and feelings with its claws until they are ripped to shreds without mercy?

"She moved closer and gently stroked the back he still turned toward her, feeling it with her weak fingertips, pleading: "What has happened to you? You were not like this. Why have you changed? You were never so cruel. I used to stir your pity, and even when you were harsh, you would turn toward me tenderly, caress my hair with your gentle whispers, pour happiness into my tormented soul, and let me drink from cups of joy until I imagined I would be quenched forever, the happiest creature in existence. Especially when I was a child. Do you remember?"

He continued to turn his back. With a long, painful sigh, he replied:

He: "Does an illusion do any good? You were the one who was mistaken, not me. You should never have believed in the illusion of happiness. The thread of illusion is short—shorter than the thread of a lie, and more treacherous, deceptive, and quick to disappear."

She: "Ah! What other choice did I have but to believe? You gave me no choice and no freedom. You stubbornly shut every door in my face. I tried so hard to open them, hoping to find my lost happiness and the passion that died between the teeth and claws of your cruelty.

“You have turned life into a game that you insist I must always lose. You forced me onto this hateful, absurd stage of life—with all its filth, ugliness, arrogance, opinions, and cruelty—without a reason or even a single explanation. All you gave me was a free ticket to a journey filled with pain, suffering, fear, disappointment, betrayal, anxiety, conflict, and strained relationships, even with those closest to me. And you did all this with such cruelty and stubbornness, then expected me to thank you for the abundant suffering you gave me for free, without my ever asking for it!

“You even demand that I struggle against waves of emotional pain, savage feelings, negative thoughts, and anxiety that gnaws at me like a merciless giant. How can I fight this torrent, this foul flood that forces me to fall into a deep abyss where anger, tension, fear, anxiety, distress, and boredom pile up, tossing me back and forth like a ball in the hands of competing waves?

“Death has been lying in wait for me from the very first moment of my birth. I was born into your hands, into this existence and this life, and you seized me at once and threw me onto life’s stage. You promised me happiness, but I saw nothing of it except a passing illusion that vanished moments later, like perfume whose trace evaporates before the certainty of nothingness and extinction.”

He continued along his path, moving farther away without turning to acknowledge her complaint, as though he had not heard a word. He walked until he reached the great door and slammed it shut behind him with such force and cruelty that it boomed like an explosion.

She rushed after him, running and calling out, begging him to show mercy. She tried to open the locked door or break its sealed bolts, which had been secured by that thunderous slam. She kept screaming, crying for help, pounding at the door with both hands until she fell unconscious to the ground.

This time, she never woke again.

End of reflection